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THE TWO BROTHERS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE," "CLARE ABBEY,"
"THE YOUNG LORD,"
&c., &c.

"Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay."—DRYDEN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

Two persons stood on the brow of a hill overlooking an extensive and fertile valley. In this valley lay the properties of two gentlemen, side by side. The houses which were on the outskirts of each domain stood within a mile and a half of each other; but the lands surrounding each habitation spread for miles into the distance on the opposite sides.

The houses were very different in form and feature. One was, or had been, an old feudal castle. Modern additions had

at various times been made to the building, but it preserved untouched two massy ivy-crowned towers, which rose up dark and gloomy against the sky. The other house was such a dwelling place as pocket-books exhibit in their portraitures of "country seats." It was a country seat on a very large scale; nothing more.

Of the two persons mentioned above, the one was a stranger, the other an inhabitant of the district; the latter had been showing off with pride and pleasure the extensive and luxuriant vale in which he lived.

"I could invent a tale about those houses," the stranger observed, after intently contemplating them. "Nay, I have already invented it. My tale is done."

"What is your tale?" asked his companion, smiling.

"After all I believe it is such an obvious

one that I need not have boasted of my *invention*. One has but to look at those two buildings, and the tale is composed. In that one I see a proud, high-minded, but somewhat forbidding family. In this one exactly the reverse—charm without character. Hate of course springs up between them. Then after hate comes love. A proud, high-minded son falls in love with a charming modern maiden. Then come strifes, and disinheritings, and broken hearts, and then . . . . either tragedy or comedy. I cannot quite decide on the conclusion of my tale."

"There is a tale, and not of a very old date, belonging to those houses. It has some features of yours, and yet is not like it. A very simple domestic tale, but one not devoid of interest; that is to say, it will have interest for those who take pleasure in seeing how human beings act under peculiar cir-

cumstances; not, perhaps, otherwise, since it is devoid of "moving accidents by flood and field," hair-breadth escapes, or indeed exciting events of any kind. If you care to hear them, these are the few facts of the story."

He entered into a short detail of certain events that had taken place in the two families.

His companion listened with interest, then observed, "I like your story better than mine." He looked again intently at the older building, and after a short silence made some inquiries. "You must enlarge a little upon the facts you told me. For instance, how was it that being as you say so proud a family, so jealous of its honour, so steady and irreproachable in character, the possessions of the Vavasours were so loaded with debt? If all were good, who was the culprit?"

"There was none, properly speaking. Loyalty (perhaps misdirected) was the cause. The old traditions of the family speak of a time of almost princely splendour till the days of the great rebellion. From that time the fortunes have fallen. For Charles I., his son, grandson, and great grandson, heavy mortgages were placed upon the land, and there never was breathing time enough for the property to right itself. Yet no Vavasour ever sold a rood of land, and no son ever complained of the debts his father left him. There was a family fire of enthusiasm and romance in the which supported it in all troubles."

"And Mr. Vavasour, the father of your story," inquired the stranger, "he was a regular old Vavasour you say?"

"Yes, a fine character, but quite idolizing in the love and pride he bore to, and

had in, his place and family. When he succeeded to *his* father, he found the property so swallowed up with debt as barely to leave an income necessary for the common expenses of life. He was only just of age, and it was a melancholy prospect. He was advised to sell. The property was not entailed, never had been so; he could do as he pleased; but no Vavasour ever had sold, and he would not. He determined by care and energy to clear off a part at least of the debt, and to raise his house again. For thirty years he lived in that old castle alone, bent on this object. Yet while saving and sparing, he was preserved by that same jealous honour, and lofty character, and strong sense, I suppose, of the responsibilities of his position, from the least taint of parsimony. It was a miraculous escape, but he did escape untouched."

"And after thirty years. What?"

"He married. He was then fifty. His love story shows the same characteristics as all the rest of the Vavasour history—Romance and strength. At eight and thirty he emerged in some degree from his seclusion, and in society he met a young lady of this county, then seventeen, and in the bloom of a beauty that made her name famous. She was as amiable as she was lovely. He saw her and loved her with the strong tenacious love of the Vavasours, but he gave no sign of what he felt. Fifty was the age, the earliest age he could appoint for a relaxation of his severe life, and he thought he had no right to impose a long delay upon her. He saw her for twelve years beset with suitors, and vehement ones; for while from natural manner she was gracious to all, it seemed as if her heart had still to be won; but he bore it in silence. At fifty he spoke, and found that through those long years she had

waited, though almost without hope, for him. He was then grey and careworn, yet no one, I believe, ever thought the marriage unsuitable, and no young marriage was ever such a love marriage as that."

"I hope she had money."

"No; that is, nothing beyond a young lady's portion. It was a part of the Vavasour pride that no member of the family had ever married an heiress."

"You speak," said the stranger smilingly, "of the Vavasour pride, and the Vavasour character, as if it was a man—whereas, you mean, I suppose, some generations of men Were all the Vavasours always alike?"

"A family character is, I believe, no uncommon thing. We see moral, and sometimes immoral qualities running through a whole race. Historians speak of the strong will of the Tudors, and the insincerity and

despotic tendencies of the Stuarts. So it seems to have been with the Vavasours. In many lighter qualities no doubt they differed; but with that single exception I mentioned to you, I never heard of one who deviated from the family character. That character I have always thought might be best described by the few words in which Milton describes himself—"a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness which let envy call pride."

"You admire the family character I see, and even the family pride."

"I do in a great degree. Of all kinds of pride, none seems to me more nearly blameless than that which makes its foundation on the noble qualities, not on the rank and wealth of its ancestors. I only say, however, more nearly blameless, for I believe all pride to be wrong. It is idolatry, and it will in-

evitably, at some time or other, be found to have a root of bitterness.

"'That which man makes his god, shall inevitably, at some time, be his tormentor.' So says Bishop Hall."

"Yes, and with truth."

N.B.—The incident which suggested this tale may be found mentioned in "Burnet's Life of Sir Matthew Hale."

THE TWO BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

For foresight is a melancholy gift
Which bares the bald, and speeds the all too swift.
HENRY TAYLOR.

THE description of a youthful scene shall introduce the principal persons of the following tale.

Imagine a long, old library—gloomy, but interesting in its gloom. The rays of a brilliant sunset streaming in from the western window, enliven and yet shadow it. Here and there the rays of light fall on heavy

oak carvings; here and there on rows of morose-looking books; but the masses of light serve chiefly to reveal, with the force of contrast, the deep recesses of the room. It is easy to see that the abode is the home of an ancient family, and that the possessor of the abode cherishes, with fondness and pride, every mark of age.

The occupants of this library are not unsuited to their abode, yet there is little of the solemnity of the room in their air. They are three in number: two boys of thirteen and fourteen, and a little girl about four years younger.

The boys are seated at a long library-table, a little too high for comfort; and around and about them are the usual accompaniments of schoolboys' tasks; coverless books, torn leaves, split pens, and shreds of blotting paper that can blot no more. The boys are *boys* in the full sense of the word: active, vigorous, and full of life; *both* are so; but with the likeness in this respect the likeness

between them ends; for brothers, they are singularly unlike.

The elder boy is very handsome; and to the charm of beauty, of features, and figure, adds all the charm of expression. It is such a face as a mother can hardly fail to worship even too much. Open and animated, full of sweetness, and spirit, and intelligence. One thing only is lacking; and this want is best expressed by the word *principle*. Acute physiognomists, and even common observers can discover the traces of an unsteady and over facile disposition. It is difficult to watch him, and not to suffer a sigh to escape, as the eyes look onward into life and its temptations.

The other boy is not handsome—he is, perhaps, ugly—his limbs, though well formed, are stragling and ungainly; his features are so strongly marked as to be hard and stern: but though he lacks beauty, and lacks, also, what is commonly understood by the word charm, there is much to interest in his

appearance. He has, in a remarkable degree, the one thing wanting in the other. Truth and steadfastness shine in his face, producing a kind of day-light over it. There are, besides, in his countenance, marked and strongly-opposing characteristics. Inflexible determination, bordering on obstinacy, and endurance, stoical and stern; yet, in contrast to these qualities, signs betokening strong passions and a fiery temper; and about the mouth, nervous and tremulous lines bespeaking something of feminine softness.

Over these brothers the little girl sits watching, like a spirit. Her place is in the western window; and the streaming sun-beams fall on her white neck and gold threads of hair, but her face is towards the occupants of the room; on one of these she rests her soft, brown eyes with a gaze at once serious, and tender, and full of pity.

The stillness of the tableau is suddenly broken. The little girl glides from her seat,

approaches the elder brother's chair, and lays her tiny hand upon the page his eyes devour. It is a page different in kind and type to the pages of closely-printed Greek that lie beside him.

He starts, looks up, and colours: then laughs, and says,

"Why, you little fairy, I did not see you; what do you want here?"

"Dear Robert," she says, in a voice of singular softness, "you will never have done; do let me take it away."

He yields at once to the imploring tone; delivers to her hands the small volume of fiction; smiles with one of his enchanting smiles at his little monitress; then with a groan, and a glance at his industrious brother, exclaims, "Now to my weary work again," and betakes himself to his task.

The little girl retreats with a soft smile on her countenance, and resumes her place and her watching. The other boy pauses for a moment in his labours—looks at his two

companions, for a moment contracts his brow, then with a sigh resumes his work.

The circumstances of the task were these :—there had been a boat-race in the neighbourhood of Audley Court, the old family place of the Vavasours. The two boys, sons of Mr. Vavasour, fond of all active sports and pastimes, had asked leave to attend it: voluntarily offering to accomplish their usual morning's studies when they returned in the afternoon. Such requests were not unseldom made ; and though all work and no play is good for no man, Mr. Vavasour was equally convinced of the truth of the opposite statement. He accepted the voluntary offer, yet considering the exciting nature of the day's amusement, only partially accepted it ; for the usual more lengthy studies substituting a careful translation of a few lines of a Greek ode. The boys were grateful, and a promise was readily given that the appointed task should be done.

The morning and afternoon were both

alike consumed in amusement. The boys returned late, flushed with excitement, heated with exercise, in no mood for study. They joined their father and mother, and in glowing terms recounted the adventures of the day. Both parents listened with willing interest; no reproach regarding the many hours of absence was made; only when the full flow of narrative came to a pause, the father simply said, "And now I depend on your promise, my boys."

The promise had been forgotten, and a shade overspread both faces. If observed, however, no comment was made. Mr. Vavasour returned to the occupation his sons' entrance had disturbed, and glancing at the clock, merely added, "Go into the library. I shall come to you in an hour." It was then half-past five.

The boys retreated. No word of their father's was ever controverted, and they fully understood that he depended upon their adherence to their word.

The task had difficulties; but none which attention could not master. Mr. Vavasour was firm and strict with his sons; but never unjust or severe. He required self-conquest; but never asked for conquests beyond their power to perform. On entering the library, the boys found all prepared, and went at once to their work.

Everard, the younger boy, prepared to do it with all his might. One passion at this time ruled and governed his life—love for his father; a love made up of fear and reverence, and strong natural affection. To please him, made his happiness—the dread of disappointing him haunted him like a spectre. A gay scene was dancing before his eyes; a pleasant noise of dashing oars and shouts of triumph were ringing in his ears: but his father's voice, "I depend on your promise," rose above these and drowned them. He leant his head on his hands, and with a vigorous effort, conquering the lassitude and dissipation of his mind, set to work.

Robert also set to work, but less resolutely. The same sounds were in his ears, and wanting the determined will, he could not banish them. He tried, but it was a feeble trial. He too loved his father, and feared to displease him; but his was not the love that conquers all things. His gaze wandered over his book, but his mind received no idea. He wrote a few words, then scratched them out; then scribbled some figures of boats and boatmen on the blotting paper; then spoiled some pens, then mended them; then, with an expression of weariness, he pulled his pocket-handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his forehead. In returning it whence it came, his hands encountered the small volume of fiction mentioned above, and drawing it out he glanced over the pages. It was the *Mysteries of Udolpho;* he had been engaged in its study the day before. The pages were refreshing after the hard lines of distasteful Greek, and he reposed himself as he read.

Deprived of this temptation by the watchful care of his little guardian, he returned to his task, but the resolute will was still wanting. In vain he endeavoured to master the sense of what he read. When one line was clear, the next appeared to contradict it; when the sense was found and the ideas formed, no words in the English language appeared to be capable of expressing them. His head became dizzy and perplexed; and suddenly starting up he approached the western window.

"What a shame to be shut up here!" he exclaimed, his eye wandering longingly over the sunny woods and fields. "I would give twenty pounds at this moment to be that cow. Better be a cow at liberty, than a man a slave."

"It is a pity," responded the sympathizing voice of the little girl, "but, dear Robert, you know you promised."

"I promised to try, and I have tried, and I can't do it. I tell you what, Hope, I hate

Greek, and I hate translating, and I hate being shut up here. Now, really," and his voice became quite pathetic, "would not *any* one say it was a shame to be boxed up in a dingy old prison, on such a night as this. I am sure it grieves my soul."

"But all this grieves only you, dear Robert," the child argued, looking up at him with a pleading look, "but if you don't do it, it grieves your father."

Robert was affected by her words. He smiled, and put his hand caressingly on her head. "You have not expressed yourself very clearly, little logician, but I see what you mean, and you are right; so come, my good angel, and take me back to my work." He held out his hand, and with a sweet, proud smile of joy, she led him to his place. He began again to work, and she stood by his side patient and immoveable; her eyes fixed upon him, and him alone.

The other boy looked up. He had watched her passing; and now with a contraction of

his brow, he contemplated her absorbed devotion to his brother. "You give *me* no help nor encouragement, little Hope," at last he said; and there was pain in the tone in which he spoke.

"You don't want it," she replied, gently and simply; and not even then did a glance of her eye wander towards him.

Everard threw down his pen, and lay back in his chair. Sadness, hurt-feeling, and something of impatience clouded his countenance. He seemed + 'e disgusted with his own industry.

The movement attracted Robert's attention. He turned his head and glanced at his brother's well-filled page. "Why, Everard, you have almost done!" he exclaimed; "what a shame!"

"Yes, it is a shame!" Everard cried, with flashing eyes, "that you, who are as far beyond me in cleverness as I am to little Hope, should allow me to outstrip you so."

"Well, it is a shame," Robert replied; a

glow, half of shame, and half of gratified vanity, overspreading his handsome face.

"It is not too late, dear Robert," prompted the sweet voice of his little guardian, "if only you will work and make haste."

Robert looked at his watch, shook his head, and sighed. "Twenty minutes after six, Hope; it's no use now; but at any rate," he added, after a moment, "I'll have a try for it;" and he set to work with an earnestness which half an hour before would have successfully completed his task.

Everard remained thoughtful. He leant back in his chair, and his eye wandered gloomily and uneasily from his own unfinished task to his brother. Emulation with an equal, with one we have a right to surpass, and who to-morrow may outstrip us, is a painless and animating feeling. But generous natures feel pain, and not pleasure, in a victory that by right should not be won So far as his own feeling was concerned, Everard would have preferred to share in his

brother's disgrace. To fail with him, would bring him more and greater love than success. Not Hope alone, but his mother, would, he well knew, look with kindlier eyes on failure with Robert, than success without him. For three or four minutes of the now precious time, Everard remained agitated and undecided; and then, again, he saw his father's face, and heard his father's voice, and again the ruling passion conquered. He returned with energy to his work, and when the old Manor House clock chimed the half-hour, the last word was written by his pen.

The clock struck, and Mr. Vavasour, the soul of punctuality, rose and called his wife.

"Come, Joan," he said, "let us see how these boys have obeyed us."

They entered the library together; and anxious looks from one parent, and penetrating ones from the other, fell on the two brothers.

Mr. Vavasour was like Everard; but age

had softened and harmonized his proportions, and he was a handsome old man. A merely superficial observer was always struck by his benevolent and venerable air : his tall figure slightly bent, his silver hairs, his firm but lingering tread; he seemed a picture of graceful old age, from which gentleness and sympathy might be expected; but a very little study discovered that the countenance was stern. Age had softened the hard features; but the mental expression was far more really stern than that of his son. There were, however, the same marks of opposing qualities that have been mentioned as apparent in the countenance of Everard. Strong passions, and deep feeling, and the same soft and tremulous lines about the mouth. It was a face which some would have feared too much to love; but which those who did love, loved passionately.

The elder son was a reflection of his mother—though time, experience, a woman's nature, and obedience to her husband, had

banished from her countenance the unsteadiness apparent in his. She was many years younger than her husband, and was still remarkable for a beauty, once the theme of wonder and praise; but even this beauty was less attractive than the softness and gentleness of her air and voice. Her character had singular charms, and much virtue, and if a few faults mingled with her virtues, it was but the common lot of humanity. Of these faults the most serious was the idolatry of her eldest son. To love too much is impossible, but to idolize is selfish. It harms the idol, and tends to injustice regarding others.

Mr. Vavasour approached, and both his sons arose; but there was no eagerness in either. *Their* eyes were cast down, while little Hope fastened hers on his face with a look that deprecated displeasure.

Mr. Vavasour looked from one to the other, and his brows knit into an expression of mingled sternness and pain. With him no

dereliction of duty was small or great. Obedience was obedience, and a promise a promise; and no consideration of more or less could make a duty not a duty.

"Well, Robert," he said, "how have you obeyed me?"

Robert made no answer. Though daring enough in his father's absence, his *present* displeasure always unmanned him.

"I see you have failed; I did not expect this." And without another word he passed on.

"And you, Everard," he said, turning to his second son—and anxiety made his voice harsh.

Everard gave his completed task; but his heart swelled with sorrow, not with joy, for no glance from his mother's eye spoke of anxiety for him. Her eyes and Hope's were with Robert in his disgrace.

Mr. Vavasour read the translation carefully through, then laid it down. "There

are many faults here, Everard," he said, looking at his son, "but they are faults of ignorance, not of negligence. I do not need to be told that you have tried with all your heart to please me. God bless you, my boy," and he laid his hand softly and kindly on Everard's shoulder.

For a moment Everard's heart bounded beneath that approving touch, but it sunk and died as he saw his mother's averted face. His praise was agony to her; he knew it, saw it, felt it.

Mr. Vavasour stayed for no more words, but retraced his steps down the long library. When he reached the door, he looked back. Everard was standing alone. Robert's head was laid on the table; and beside him and over him bent his mother and Hope.

"Joan," he called; and leaving the door open returned to the study.

Mrs. Vavasour stayed but to whisper one gentle word; and, still without a glance to Everard, rejoined her husband. Not that

Everard was not loved. He was only forgotten, because Robert was unhappy.

Mr. Vavasour did not speak till his wife was seated. He then said, not with sternness—for to her he was never stern—but sadly, "Joan, you will spoil that boy."

"Love cannot spoil," she replied, with some agitation, "though harshness sometimes may."

"Do you call *me* harsh?" asked her husband; and round his lips quivered that tremulous movement which in him, as in Everard, betokened strong or wounded feelings.

"To none but Robert," she eagerly rejoined; "sometimes to him."

"No, Joan," he said, regarding her fixedly, "not harsh; but wise in time. You look at Robert's single faults—you see now a little indolence, now carelessness, now self-indulgence, and you think that, with his youth and high spirits, these may be excused; but I look on: and as, day after day, I see the

signs of unsteadiness, and cowardice, and want of truth, I ask myself, what will be the end when these faults have strengthened themselves and bear fruit? If Robert is to be saved from becoming a dishonour to our house, it must be through the discipline of awe and fear, as well as love. Let him see that his faults grieve and pain us—as they do in my heart!" he broke out passionately; then resumed again; "and that he may see it, let us not lightly own, nor lightly forgive them."

"I believe you are right," she replied, humbly, "and yet when Robert is miserable. . . . . You do not know how he loves you—how ardent his feelings are—how he suffers under your displeasure!"

"Yes, Joan, but I do know, and it is these very ardent feelings that make me tremble. If now, in their freshness, while yet in his father's house, they fail in every moment of temptation, how will they stand in the fiery trial of the world? Believe me,

unless a great change takes place, the good seed in Robert's heart will too soon be choked with thorns."

The twilight was deepening; the clock chimed the quarter after seven; there came a low tap at the study door.

It opened; and Robert entered, holding in one hand his completed task, while the other yielded to the guidance of Hope. There was no shame on his fine countenance, but an expression of open and truthful humility.

"I am very sorry to have displeased you, father," he said, simply, "and I have done the best I can to atone for it. Hope persuaded me, and Everard gave me help, and here is my task. I know it is too late to give you pleasure; but I hope not too late to show that . . . . that I am very sorry father!"

Mr. Vavasour received it from his hands, with a faint glow on his countenance; and the "God bless you, my boy," which was his usual simple and forcible expression of

extreme approval, made more than one heart supremely happy.

This childish scene has been thus minutely detailed, in order more rapidly and vividly to pourtray the actors in the following tale, than description can easily do.

A few more words are required to set in its proper light the position of one of these.

Hope Linton was the orphan child of a sister of Mrs. Vavasour. In her aunt's house, and adopted by her husband, the worst evils of an orphan's lot were unknown. They treated her as their child—the boys as their sister—and few ever thought of her in any other light.

She was a child of peculiar character, appearing to be made of two qualities only—love and pity. Her love, not the love that clings, but more angel-like, desires to spread its wings and shield; her pity, an intense compassion, which made her appear, in spite of the guileless goodness of her own nature, sent into the world on a special mission to

the erring. She was not clever, yet had her own silent, serious thoughts; and though neither energetic, nor active-spirited, seemed, by the intensity of her feeling, to accomplish what she had to do.

The somewhat unnatural seriousness of her nature was partly the effect of circumstances. Her father had been a thoughtless, unprincipled man; her mother had borne, not the ills alone that extravagance brings in its train, but the deeper pain of her husband's neglect. After a desolate life of many years, a child was born to her. It came like light into a dark place; and partly in thankful acknowledgment of the blessing given, and partly as a warning to her own failing spirits against despair, she called it "Hope." Four years after its birth her husband died. The hope for which she had waited all her lifelong was then fulfilled. The hours of sickness and death brought his repentance and returning love. She saw him die: and as if her task was then accomplished, quickly fol-

lowed him—leaving her child to her sister's protection. The house in which the little orphan was born, was a house of sorrow. Early clouds hung over her infancy; and a sobering hue was left for ever on her soft cheek and thoughtful disposition. There was, however, something of her name in her nature. She was serious, but rarely sad.

CHAPTER II.

It was the jealous pride that shuns disgrace ;
A pride in honest fame by virtue gained,
In sturdy boys to virtue's labours trained :
Pride in a life that slander's tongue defied,
In fact a noble passion, misnamed Pride.

CRABBE.

THE strongly-marked character of the Vavasour family has been noticed in the introduction of this tale. The exception to the hitherto unbroken line of true Vavasours was in Robert. He was no Vavasour. The family pride did not influence him. The "niceness of nature" and "honest haughtiness" were not to be found in him. He was inclined to laugh at his grim old ancestors, and had been heard to wish away some relics

of their grandeur. His character was full of good and full of beauty, but it was not the good or the beauty of his own family. In place of their nobility of soul—truly noble, yet somewhat narrow—he had a generous spirit, open and world-wide. In place of their slumbering and self-restrained romance, he had warm affections, ardent but volatile; In place of their unconquerable resolution, he had an altogether different form of resolution—self-will; and in place of their self-control he had no counterpart to offer—for impatient of authority, and fond of pleasure, he was not disposed to be a severe Mentor to himself.

In any family, Robert's character would have excited care and anxiety; a care as strong as the love he inspired; but in this family it excited a fear amounting to torture. Mr. Vavasour loved his son passionately (in his mind every feeling was a passion); this very love made his eyes sharp and keen to detect Robert's failures. Every childish

fault was seen—not only in its own proportions, but in the dimensions of future years; not as the small shadow of the noonday, but as the long shadow of the evening.

Yet it would have been hard to say wherein lay the fault in Robert's education. If there was strictness, it was without severity. If there were restraints, there were also unbounded indulgences. Though obedient to the idolizing mother's wish—the boys were brought up at home—they were not home boys; both were famous in the country for their bold riding and skill in every sport.

The fault was probably in the bounded limits of Mr. Vavasour's mind and sympathies. He had his standard, his *own* standard, therefore a narrow one. He endeavoured too much to assimilate Robert to his own idea. He did not go forward to meet the hopes, the thoughts, the qualities, springing up in his differently-moulded son.

Robert may have felt the standard to be too sternly high. It may have strained his

eyes to look upon it. Conceiving such a lofty form of virtue to be required, he may have felt an improbability set before him; and the very excellence of the standard may have caused a laxity in his mind. It is possible!

Such criticisms on education are easily made. Such inferences are easily drawn, when a plan has failed to work. It is not so easy for those whose hearts are in their children's welfare, and who feel their responsibility to God who gave the child, for every thought implanted in its mind, to trace the exact limits of duty, and to discover the point at which an excess of good instruction begins.

Mr. Vavasour was a religious man, and all he did was religiously done. If he failed it was human infirmity that failed; the human infirmity of overmuch pride in his family's good deeds; the over idolizing cherishing of an honour hitherto without a stain.

It was three years later than the date of the last chapter. Mr. Vavasour's two sons were on the eve of going to college. Words are not needed to picture the hopes and fears of that time; the hopes of the young; the hopes and far stronger fears of those who send their treasures for the first time into the world's fiery trials.

The evening passed silently. Mr. Vavasour sat by the fire in profound thought: even his newspapers untouched beside him. On the opposite side of the fire sat Mrs. Vavasour, working with unremitting industry. Tears, very natural ones, were in her eyes, and thus she concealed them.

At a little distance from her sat Robert; and Hope on a lower chair beside him. Hope was unchanged still; like a child and a spirit; and unchanged, too, was the intensity of the gaze with which she watched him. Occasionally he laid his hand caressingly on her head; occasionally smiled, and addressed to her a few laughing words; but for the

most part he, too, was silent, and his countenance was sad. Up to this moment he had been looking forward joyfully; but now his happy youth, his home, his mother's love, rose up like a sweet and soothing picture, and touched him. Robert's feelings were strong and excitable. If volatile, yet, while they lasted, intense. He saw his mother's tear-stained and trembling lashes. He saw his father's thoughtfulness; he knew that fears and hopes filled their hearts for him; hopes great as their love; fears, which his conscience told him were not idle. Agitated with these and other thoughts, he found it hard to restrain his own tears. They came and went—brushed away with a dash of his hand, and a half-ashamed smile; and every smile and every tear gave a new charm to his countenance. In her stealthy glances his mother saw them, and his softness bound a fresh link of love round her already too idolizing heart.

But there was one who was more sad than

all. This night had brought to Everard the knowledge, never hitherto so fully understood, that he was *nothing*.

He saw his mother's rapid glances into Robert's face; he saw Hope's unchanging gaze; he saw his father's meditations; and felt that anxiety for Robert was the cause. He, too, was going into the world, and the world's temptations, and no love, no prayers of love would watch over his unguarded youth.

The consciousness brought exceeding bitterness. He said in his heart, that he was selfish thus to have his thoughts fastened in himself. He struggled with them, but in vain. The effect of the struggle was, to make his countenance stern, and his voice hard. Once when he spoke his mother looked up with a startled look—so harsh and dry was the tone. Her eye wandered on to Robert's softened countenance, and almost unconsciously the contrast was remarked upon and felt. Everard felt it himself;

hated himself; owned that he was selfish and deserved no love, and knitted his brows into yet sterner meditations. Thus we misjudge others, nay, thus misjudge our ownselves.

At length the clock struck half-past ten. It was the usual hour of separation: and accustomed to please the husband and father in his love of order and punctuality, all had been in the habit of obeying the signal; but this evening there was no movement. The next word was to be—farewell. The boys were to start before day the following morning, and Mr. Vavasour had desired that no further leave-takings should take place. Robert's eyes were on his mother. He waited for her to speak. She sat with cast-down eyes awaiting some other signal.

The silence was broken by Mr. Vavasour. He raised his head from his thoughtful posture, and simply said, "I wish to speak to you, my boys."

"Yes father," they replied with tremu-

lous eagerness; Robert was in the mood for admonition; to Everard his father's words were always pearls of great price.

Concisely, but forcibly, as was his wont, Mr. Vavasour gave his words of parting advice. His first charge was to both his sons together, and consisted of an admonition to fear God, and to honour their name. The first was dwelt on at greater length: but there was a pathos in his voice as he spoke of the second, which betrayed how near an idol it was to his heart.

When he addressed them separately, it was with a special regard to the probable temptations of each. Both must have felt, both did feel, that the minutest circumstances of their past life, and future prospects, had been revolved in their father's mind. He spoke to Robert as his heir. He pointed to the duties and responsibilities for which he must prepare himself, and dwelt on the temptations of those who are exempted from the original curse, "In the

sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat bread." "Make yourself worthy, my boy," were his concluding words, "of the position to which, before many years, God will call you. Bind upon yourself the yoke He has laid lightly on your shoulders, and remember, Robert," he added in a solemn and tremulous voice, "the words of the wise man, '*My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the love of thy mother; for a wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son puts his mother to shame.*'"

There were strong resolves in Robert's breast, and the "I will remember, father," was spoken with vehement earnestness. He drew nearer to his mother, and placed his hand in hers—the movement of the body expressing that the guide of his life was chosen.

His fathers eyes followed him with a softened smile, and a look of glad confidence. They rested on him for a moment; then he roused himself to address his younger son. There was more to be said to Everard.

There were explanations to be made; and his voice, as he resumed, had a drier and more business-like tone, which grated on his son's ear.

The explanations to Everard were regarding "the portion of goods" that would fall to him. Having but two sons, Mr. Vavasour said, and being well known to possess large estates, and full power over what he had, "it might be Everard's expectation, it would certainly be the expectation of others, that for him an ample provision would be made." This he warned him would not be the case. He spoke minutely of the state of his affairs, and pointed out the strong necessity that no divisions, no deductions should be made.

"What is just, Everard," he gravely said, "you will have, but let your dependence be on yourself."

Then leaving his drier tone, he spoke with a kindling eye of his hopes from the industry of his son.

"I am ambitious for you; yes, my boy, I

own it. I would have you bring fresh honour to our name. I put that name, I put that honour in your hands, and confess to you that it is your father's dearest treasure. And yet," he added, in a lower tone, "there is something beyond ambition. It is in God's hands whether or not you can be great; it is in yours with His help that you can be good. My prayer for you both is that you may guard our name from taint of vice, and bring it honour by your virtuous deeds. Let this be done, and I am content. And now, my boys," he said, "God bless you."

He rose hastily from his seat, and extended a hand to each; then drawing them nearer, with something of solemnity, kissed their brows. "And now Joan," he continued, "bid them good-bye."

Violent exhibitions of feeling were distasteful to Mr. Vavasour. All knew it. Swiftly therefore and silently the farewell was taken. Robert, softened and overcome, flew to his own room. Mrs. Vavasour, fearful of grieving her husband by her overmuch

sorrow, followed his example. The drawing-room door closed, and Everard and Hope went up the stairs together.

Hope rarely cried, and was not crying now; but her thoughts were not with her companion, as she walked silently by his side; and when they reached the landing-place where their ways separated, she passed on without perceiving him.

He stopped her with an expression almost of anguish on his countenance. "I wish you would say good-bye to me Hope.

"I did," she replied, in some surprise; but immediately and kindly held out her little hand

"You did not say it as if you cared. I wish you would sometimes think of me, Hope. I know you pray for Robert; I wish you would sometimes say a prayer for me, that I may never disappoint my father."

"I will, Everard," she replied; "but you don't want it;" and she shook her head with

a melancholy shake, as if thinking of one who did.

"I do," he cried, passionately. "Why do you say that, Hope? It is unkind of you."

She looked at him, as if startled and puzzled by his vehemence; but, after a moment's thought, in her sweet, kind voice, she replied to him—"I am sure, dear Everard, I will think of you, and pray for you, if it will make you happy; but you know you are not like poor Robert; and you must not be angry if I think most of him. Oh! Everard," she continued, clasping her hands together, and for once speaking out all the fears and troubles of her heart, "I am sometimes so frightened when I think—if Robert should forget all that my uncle says, what will become of him? He is so good—so good," she repeated fondly; "but he does forget. Will you think of him, dear Everard, and remind him when he is far away?"

"I will, if I can. But don't be afraid,

Hope. How can Robert forget, when he thinks of *you?* Good-bye," and the hard-featured boy stooped and kissed his young cousin, with a mother's tenderness.

" Good-bye," she said softly, and held out her hand again, before she glided away.

He stood looking after her, till the last glimpse of her white dress disappeared from the long corridor ; and when he returned to his own room, a tear was on his lashes, and an aching longing in his heart.

CHAPTER III.

Her younger sister, that Speranza hight,
Was clad in blue, that her beseemed well;
Not all so cheerful seemed she of sight
As was her sister; whether dread did dwell
Or anguish in her heart, is hard to tell.
Upon her arm a silver anchor lay,
Whereon she leaned ever, as befell,
And ever up to Heaven as she did pray,
Her steadfast eyes were bent, nor swerved other way.

SPENSER'S *Faery Queen.*

NEARLY four years more have come and gone. Robert Vavasour is twenty-one. The tale of these four years is an oft-told tale.

During the first year of college life he had been tolerably steady. The lingering influences of his home, the companionship of his brother, and the sincere wish to do

well, kept him, for the most part, in the right track. In the second year he began to be less anxious. Evil began to be familiar to him. He fell into a gay and thoughtless set, and found its charms seductive. His high spirits, his ready wit, his unfailing good-humour, and lavish generosity, made him a desirable companion, and he was courted with an assiduity that might have turned a stronger head. For a time, days of remorse succeeded his weeks of thoughtless dissipation; but remorse was distasteful, and he endeavoured to escape from it. He began to shun Everard, on whose example he could not look without remorse. Temptations assailed him on all sides, and he ceased to desire not to be led into temptation. He was hurrying along his dangerous way, when, early in the third year, Mr. Vavasour received a kind recommendation from an old friend at Oxford, that he should be withdrawn at once. There was no hope for him, he said, where he was, and he might

thus be saved from public disgrace. It was done. His numerous debts were paid, and he returned home.

It was a painful return. Robert was smarting under a sense of unjust usage, and was more rebellious than penitent. He had done no more than others, so at least he felt, and why was he to be disgraced. His state of mind required judicious treatment, and in this Mr. Vavasour failed. To deal judiciously with the erring, *justice* is almost more necessary than kindness. One degree too much of condemnation and the good influence is lost. To be perfectly just, it is necessary to look on the fault, not through the calm eyes of a mere observer, but with the eyes of the erring and tempted themselves. Nothing, indeed, can to a sane and right mind disguise the blackness of moral ill; yet perfect justice considers the circumstances of the offender, and allows a question of more or less in guilt.

It was in this perfection of justice that

Mr. Vavasour failed. The word *disgrace* was rankling in his heart; the idol passion blinded his eyes. He was not unkind to his son. He loved him too deeply, his desire for his welfare was far too intense for unkindness; but he was severe. He did not, like the father in the prodigal, go forth to meet him; but, while receiving him with forgiveness, suffered him to feel the weight of his displeasure. While pardoning the offender, he looked with something of bitter contempt on the offence, and Robert's quick mind felt it, and it stung him.

The return home was painful, so painful, that a long sojourn was not to be thought of. In his father's presence, Robert's haughty and rebellious spirit was, even against his will, awed; and the restraint was irksome. With his mother and Hope he was full of remorse, but what is so unendurable as the remorse that leads to no repentance. He longed to make his escape! While much perplexed in mind regarding the destination

of his son, Mr. Vavasour was applied to by Robert for permission to travel. He had received an invitation from a young man of his acquaintance a year or two younger than himself, to accompany him and his tutor on a tour of some length. Mr. Vavasour knew nothing of the young man's family, but the invitation was opportune, the tutor sounded well, and in the few enquiries he had time to make, he heard nothing to lead him to refuse a permission earnestly sought. It was given, and with it advice so touching in its anxiety, and means so ample to secure his improvement and enjoyment in the life before him, that Robert again left home, his heart swelling with sorrow, love, and penitence. But man's nature is not formed to bear a repetition of the same excitements. Exhaustion is the necessary end of violent and shortlived emotions.

Of Everard's college life there is little to be said. Whatever the inner life might be, the outer life, sober and industrious, fur-

nished no materials to tell a tale. *Not to disappoint his father.* This had been the influencing principle of his early days; this was the principle that carried him safely through the snares of his opening youth. He left college with a moral character on which there rested no spot, and with a reputation, if not for genius, yet for sound intellect and unconquerable energy. "You may be proud of your son," were the words of healing balm, which soothed Mr. Vavasour's wounded spirit. On leaving college, Everard went to London to study for the bar, and read in the chambers of an eminent solicitor.

"No, Joan," said Mr. Vavasour, resolutely though sadly, "when my mind is made up as to a duty, not even your wish can alter my determination."

It was a few days before Robert's birthday of twenty-one.

Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour were seated in the study formerly mentioned. Mrs. Vavasour

was sitting near her husband, her hands on a small table placed between them, and a look of imploring earnestness on her countenance. She was but little changed in the three years that had passed; there are some hearts so hopeful that in them anxiety takes the form of hope; but her husband was much changed. His complexion was paler, his features sharper, his head more bowed. It was easy to see that secret suffering was undermining his strength, and slowly, but surely bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave

"Then do not make it up too hastily," was Mrs. Vavasour's reply, in a tone of strong agitation; "*consider.*"

"I have considered. Ah! Joan, have I not had time to do it. If I saw in Robert one grain of true repentance, I would be the first to hail it, and honour him with the best honour I could shew; but I know, and you know, that there is no repentance in him."

There was no reply. After a short silence Mr. Vavasour said more gently, "What have you to urge that I have not already considered."

"Much," she said eagerly and tremulously. "Let that honour be shown to Robert in the sight of your people, which he has not done himself. From his earliest years you have spoken of this day—your people have looked to it as one of rejoicing—if you pass it now in silence, you shame him whom you wish them to honour. If Robert felt more fully that their eyes were upon him, that after you they look to him as their protector and friend; the weight of responsibility would press upon him, and the shame of coming short from the example of his father, would make him strong.

She paused—the tremulous movements of her husband's lips encouraging her to hope; but though agitated, there was no relenting; his voice, when it came, was low and stern.

"No Joan, it is not the vain honour of

false outward show that will bring a shameless and degenerate son to reason."

"You speak too harshly of him," his mother cried with earnest passion.

"Do I speak too harshly?" he said, and the anguish of a wounded spirit was in his tone, "then listen Joan to these," and he drew some letters from his pocket. "I would have spared you the pain of hearing them."

"Hope, my child," said Mrs. Vavasour softly, putting out her hand to arrest her husband, "it will be best for you to leave us."

Hope rose from her seat in one of the deep recesses of the windows, but not to obey her aunt. She came forward and laid her hands on Mr. Vavasour's chair, "Are they about Robert?" she asked; "then let me stay."

Mrs. Vavasour hesitated and looked reluctant.

"Better to know all," she pleaded, earnestly, "than to dread too much."

"Let her stay, Joan," Mr. Vavasour said

decidedly, and she stood leaning on his chair while he read.

The first letter was from the family solicitor, enclosing bills from some of Robert's alarmed creditors, and requesting in a formal style to know Mr. Vavasour's pleasure on the subject. There was a second letter from the same person. This was written as a friend's, it informed him of some facts which he had ascertained regarding Robert's money transactions, and offered his advice on the best manner of dealing with them. A third letter was from a Mr. Percival, an old friend of Mr. Vavasour's, resident in London. It was written in the supposition that Mr. Vavasour was ignorant of Robert's mode of life. He could not, he said, neglect to give him the information he thought necessary, however painful it might be.

Parts only of this letter were read aloud. Mr. Vavasour hurried to the conclusion,

It was an earnest recommendation that Robert should be ordered to return home. From some circumstances, the writer said, which, owing to the intimacy of Robert with a nephew of his own, had come to his knowledge, he was convinced that he was suffering severely from the want of money; and he felt certain that this would be the moment to induce him to make a full confession of his difficulties, and to release him from the snares in which he was entangled.

The letter was read with an unfaltering voice; but when he paused there was the sadness of a breaking heart in the question, "Is this, Joan, a son to honour?"

Mrs. Vavasour remained silent. Tears of bitter sorrow were in her heart; but not one was permitted to start into her eyes, lest the sight of his mother's grief should add a drop to the full cup of Robert's condemnation.

"You do not speak, Joan," her husband said, regarding her steadfastly. "Hope, my

child," and he passed his arm round her waist, "am I not right?"

"Perhaps," she said, softly, "but dear uncle Richard, you must not despair. Let Robert come home; he will yet be all you wish."

"I will not despair," he replied, "if I have strength.—God give me *hope*!"

The passionate sorrow of this prayer broke from him as if against his will. He drew himself up sternly after it—whilst his wife, unable any longer to battle with her tears, withdrew to a distant part of the room.

Hope stooped and kissed his brow; then followed her aunt, to put her arms round her neck, and whisper, "There is hope, indeed, dear aunt Joan," and left the room.

For a time the husband and wife remained in silence, and apart. At length Mr. Vavasour rose and walked to the window, where the mother stood shedding, yet concealing most bitter tears.

He looked at her for some moments, then

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he held out his hand to her and said, "Joan, forgive me now and henceforward, the pain I may cause you for Robert's sake. You think me harsh; believe me, the pain you feel lies deeper *here!*" and he laid his other hand on his own breast.

With trembling lips and reverencing love Mrs. Vavasour kissed the hand extended to her. No harshness on his part could for one moment change her feelings towards him; the bitterness of her grief was in the strife of two loves equally idolizing, and the endeavour to think with blind partiality of the actions of each.

Four days after this conversation, on the eve of Robert's birthday, the 25th of August, a post-chaise stopped at the lodge gate of Audley Court.

The lodge on the London side was a mile from the house. So soon as the chaise had passed through the gate, a voice, loud and impatient, called to the post-boy to stop

"Let us get out and walk," Robert said, restlessly addressing his brother. "I have got to prepare myself for awful company, and I can't do it, boxed up here."

The chaise was left; and striking out of the road, the brothers took their way across the park.

Both were much changed in appearance: and in Everard the change was all on the right side. He was not handsome, but he was no longer ugly. His figure, once straggling and ungainly, had attained its due proportions: and there was a certain grace of strength about him which gave ease and power to his movements. His features were still too large and too strongly marked; his countenance, when in repose, still grave and stern; but his air was frank and simple, his smile sweet, and the light of his dark-grey eyes so soft, that no harsh or repelling impression was left on the mind.

As a boy, his appearance had been interesting: in its improved state it was more

interesting. He was young—barely twenty—and his body had all the activity and elasticity of youth; but the expression of his countenance was that of mature and advanced manhood. None could have heard with surprise that he was thirty. This was caused in a degree by his marked features; but it was far more the shining-out of the mind within. The freshness of youth his mind had in its tastes and fancies; but the tone of his feelings was that of comparative age. None heard him speak, none looked in his face without discovering that life had been to him no flowery way, the fire of temptation "no moist and whistling wind;" that in his efforts not to disappoint his father, he had learned by experience man's frailty; and that if he had been victorious in the end the conflicts of the way had left no faint traces on his character.

With Robert it was different; he, too, was outwardly improved. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was

no blemish in him. His blue eye was darker and brighter; his raven hair more glossy and curling; while the deeper hue of his complexion, and the vigour and activity of his limbs preserved him from that appearance of effeminacy which too perfect beauty in a man is apt to give. But with all these improvements there was a painful change. It is sad to see the freshness of youth obscured with worldly cares; it is sad to see its frank ingenuousness troubled with worldly forethought; but more or less these things must happen; and the necessity causes sorrow rather than pain. In Robert the change was a sadder and deeper one. There was a reckless, restless light in his eye which told a tale of dissipation; of innocence passing away; of familiarity with vice; while a daring something in his manner, spoke of conscience hardly dealt with—its efforts resisted—its pleadings repelled and subdued.

He walked silently by Everard's side; but there was agitation in his *deeds*. His foot trampled on every wild flower, and his

cane switched off the head of many a young springing plant.

At last he spoke, in a tone whose lightness endeavoured to conceal a troubled mind. "I wonder what reception I am likely to meet. The ceremony will be an unpleasant one, and I, for my part, would eschew it if I could."

Everard was silent; but not from indifference. He was troubled with the same painful feelings he had felt in his youth—almost a disgust at his own superior steadiness—almost a longing to be as Robert was.

"Why don't you speak out, Everard?" Robert exclaimed, in an irritated manner; "and why do you look so solemn? If you know anything of the matter, say it at once; what am I to expect?"

"I know nothing," he replied, with warmth, "except that I am sorry you have any doubts. My father and mother, you must know better than I do, are longing for your return."

"Doubts! I have some little reason to

have doubts. First, a bad conscience; secondly, this letter received this morning. Take it, and now tell me what I am to expect."

The letter contained a few lines from Mr. Vavasour, apprising his son of his determination not to celebrate his coming of age. It was written with kindness and feeling, but there was no attempt at disguising his view of his conduct. Through every line, in every expression, the broken heart revealed itself.

Everard's blood mounted to his cheek as he read; and returning it to Robert, he said, in strong emotion, "Oh! Robert, how can you bear thus to grieve my father? I would rather die than do it."

"So would I at this moment," Robert said, agitatedly, "I wish I was dead this moment, and buried in that ditch. And yet," after an instant, he lightly added, as if ashamed of the feeling he had shewn, "though

it is as good as I deserve, I would, if I might, bespeak a wholesomer grave."

"You can give more pleasure than ever you have caused pain," burst from Everard's lips. "Oh! Robert, be yourself! Do you remember the night before we went to college?"

There was a visible struggle in Robert's countenance. It was evident that an effort was made to repress his better feelings; but partly shame, partly the very dread of his rising penitence, fought with, and mastered them. "I have a better memory than I wish to have," he said, carelessly. "A good memory is a good thing in some cases, but it does not do for those who have a ghostlike past to bring up at a moment's notice. Come, Everard, let us leave this solemn talk; you were a good hand at vaulting once—let us see if study has paralyzed your limbs."

He sprang lightly over a high fence, calling to his brother to follow him. Everard

complied with equal success. "That's a good fellow," Robert said, nodding his head approvingly; "I would as soon see a man a woman, as a bookworm."

"There is Hope," Everard observed, after a short silence.

"Where?" cried Robert, excitedly. "Ah! so she is, my good angel. Poor little Hope!" he added, in a low voice and a tone of deep feeling. "I shall never weary her out." But the words were hardly said, before he resumed his wild spirits; and talking and laughing, he went on to the spot where she stood.

She had seen them from her window, and had hurried without her bonnet to a gate which led from the pleasure grounds into the park. There she paused; the evening breeze blowing about her golden curls, and a faint colour of expectation on her cheek.

Hope was scarcely altered, except in height, since her childhood. For this reason she was more striking as a woman than she had been as a child. Few preserve, even in early

youth that soft and rounded grace which is the charm of children's beauty ; fewer still carry on to maturer years the ethereal, innocent look which so many children possess. In both these respects Hope was unchanged. She was now, at seventeen, singularly lovely ; but it was a strange loveliness. Clothed, indeed, in earthly form, but giving the idea of pure spirit.

A peculiarity in the growth of her hair added to her uncommon and spiritual look. Never since childhood had it increased in length or thickness, but was still like the hair of a little girl—thin, fair, soft, and silky. A few wavy curls hung about her face ; the rest, without form or fashion, were gathered up behind. This would rarely be a beauty, yet it was a beauty in her.

Robert approached ; Hope gazed at him intently ; but before she spoke, he put his arms round her and embraced her. He had done so from earliest years ; and it was not this that made her colour rise, and prompted

her, with a scarcely perceptible movement, to shrink from him

The time was come when she must understand what Robert was—when she must understand and feel the tainted mind. Till now evil had been to her but a name; Robert's misdoings but a multiplication of old youthful offences; a child herself, and Robert only thoughtless in ill, she had never yet *felt* the change. The knowledge came upon her, as she met the first bright, daring glance of his eye, and instinctively her spirit shrank before it.

Robert had a quick and keen perception, especially as regarded Hope's feelings towards himself. He needed no words to tell him what meant that gentle movement backwards; but he chose to interpret it otherwise, and addressed her in a bantering tone, little calculated to allay her fears.

"What, Hope, are you growing shy of me? I don't mean to stand that, I can tell you—

why, you are lovely;" and he fixed his admiring eye upon her: "prettier than ever—I have seen nothing so pretty for two long years. Come, Hope," and he held out his hand again, "don't blush so. You must learn to hear that you are pretty; you will hear it often, if you look as you do to-day!"

And she did look strangely lovely, as she stood—startled, grieved, perplexed; her colour rising higher and higher—something, even of terror, at Robert's bold, careless tone, in her air.

And Robert read every thought of her heart—loved her for her shrinking—and yet persisted in grieving her.

Hope's uneasiness was so visible, that Everard approached to relieve her. He had paused at a distance till now, contemplating their meeting, with the intense longings Hope's love for Robert always excited in his mind.

"You have not thought of me, Hope," he said, with a smile.

At his words she withdrew from Robert, and turned to him; and, as she received his quiet, kind embrace, she raised her eyes to his face. The clear, steadfast expression of his countenance attracted her attention, as it had never done before, and she stood regarding him in silence.

"Now, Hope, I am not going to allow this!" Robert cried, as he again placed himself at her side. "I am jealous; and have good right to be so. You never used to make up to Everard in this way;—come, don't turn your head away," and he laid his hand upon her arm; "don't you know that it is a pleasure to me to look at you?"

"Oh! Robert," she said, in a tone of inexpressible pain.

"And why, *oh! Robert;* is it wrong to be pretty? and is it right to be blind? Let me tell you, Hope . . . . ."

Some idle words were yet unspoken on his

lips, when Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour appeared, from the glass door of the study. Mr. Vavasour was leaning on his wife's arm; and even in the distance his lingering, unsteady steps were visible. It was nearly two years since Robert had seen him. The change was, to his eyes, but too apparent.

His cheek grew suddenly as white as ashes; and the hand that lay on Hope's arm seized her with a grasp of iron.

"Go to him at once, dear Robert," she said, softly and pityingly, "it will be far better."

But he put his finger on his lips to silence her, and drew her back behind an evergreen.

Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour passed on. They had not perceived their sons' approach, and were now taking their way along the broad gravel walk that led to the avenue, to watch for them.

Robert waited till they were out of sight. He then drew a deep breath, and in an altered manner said, "No, Hope, not yet; I am not fit to meet my father yet. Vile

wretch!" he muttered, with a contracted brow; then added, aloud, "Wait for me here—and when I am fit to bear it, you shall take me to him." With rapid steps he hurried away in an opposite direction.

Hope stood looking after him—unutterable thoughts clouding her brow.

Everard approached her compassionately. "Dear Hope," he said, "do not look so sad, it makes me miserable. Robert is not himself to day. Do not think he feels little—he feels too much; only he will not let us see it."

"Oh! Everard," she asked, laying her hand on his arm, and looking up in his face, "is all they say of Robert *true?*"

"Not all, but some," he replied, with serious truth. "Robert has bad companions and is easily led away. But there is no cause for despair; as surely as we stand here, Robert will be won back again."

"He speaks . . . . . he never used to

speak as he does. What is it Everard; what does he mean?"

"You must not be too severe, Hope," Everard said, with a smile. "Beauty is a good thing, and it pleases Robert to see you have it. Do not be angry with him for that."

"Not angry," she said, sadly.

"Nor grieved," he added with tenderness. "Robert loves you, and looks to you as his guardian angel. He must not see you afraid."

She looked in his face for a moment, as if to receive some new idea from his words. In that moment the impulsive desire of early years changed to a living principle. She *would* be his guardian angel—undaunted, undismayed. She stood by Everard's side in silence till Robert returned. As soon as his steps were heard, she went forward to meet him.

Everard left them together, and went towards the house. He shortly saw his

father and mother returning, and went back to give notice. One glance shewed Robert changed; it was as if something had fallen from him—so utterly had the bold and daring air vanished. The old Robert was there, with all his excellent nature shining in his face.

"Go on, Everard, there's a good fellow, and lead the way. Hope and I will come after you." He spoke without agitation. A softened humility had taken the place of fear.

Everard obeyed, and hastened onwards. His father met him as he was ever wont to do. A greeting, cordial though quiet; a smile, faint but expressive; an eye of full trust, gratitude, and hope; and the greeting ever repaid Everard for every effort and every struggle. With his mother it was otherwise; even while her arm was round his neck, and her lips touched his cheek, he could see and feel the eye straining onwards in search of another; it was but natural, for Robert's had been a long absence; but with

a throb of jealous pain he almost longed again to have returned as a penitent.

They walked on a few steps: till, suddenly, from a narrow path, Robert appeared.

He paused, to await his father's will. That will was to receive him with more than kindness. The violence he had done to his own and to his wife's feelings, in his resolution respecting Robert's birthday, had changed and softened Mr. Vavasour, producing an earnest desire to atone for his determination: but even if unprepared for kindness, no heart could have resisted the charm of Robert's penitence. No pride or false shame stood in the way; no reserve or affectation marred the truth of his humility.

Mr. Vavasour hesitated not a moment; but with a smile, sweet in its invitingness, stretched out his hand.

Robert's agitation became violent, but he struggled to speak. "Father," he said, tremulously, "you have forgiven me many times, but I am come for forgiveness again.'

"And you have it fully and freely," his father said, in his feeling voice. "God bless you my boy, and make you strong. Here, Joan," he added, turning to his wife, and placing Robert's hand in hers, "I will not keep him from you; though he knows already," and he faintly smiled, "that he has *your* blessing."

He then put his hand in Everard's arm, and walked on. He felt that pain in excited feeling which strong natures often do. He passed his hand over his eyes, as if to still himself. When he withdrew it he perceived Hope also at his side.

"You were right to hope, my child," he said, gently touching her shoulder, "Robert may do us honour yet."

She smiled as she looked in his face. The smile was such as we may fancy on an angel's countenance, when there is joy in Heaven over the lost and found.

CHAPTER IV.

See where he sits, contemplative and fixed!
Pleasure and wonder in his features mixed;
His passions tamed, and all at his control,
How perfect the composure of his soul!
Complacency has breathed a gentle gale
O'er all his thoughts, and swell'd his easy sail.

COWPER.

We must now go backwards for a few years, to make acquaintance with, and follow, some new characters; until their history (within two months of Robert's coming of age) becomes linked with those to whom we are already known.

Before a blazing fire, in a large drawing room in Portland Place, a gentleman stood alone.

It was seven o'clock; and he was awaiting

the arrival of a number of guests invited to a dinner-party. The room was splendidly furnished. The massy frames of the mirrors seemed drooping under the weight of their magnificence; the stiff, rich damask of the furniture seemed to repel with scorn the idea of repose. One glance around the room proclaimed that the owner was rich, and that his riches were by no means distasteful to him.

It was the owner who stood warming himself on the hearth. He was a handsome man, and there was none of the vulgarity of his mansion in his air. His figure was tall; his features good, and though their natural expression was inanimate and pompous, the light of an intense self-complacency shone upon them from within, and gave them intelligence. In this self-complacency there was, however, no appearance of vanity or conceit; it was something so simple and truthful as to give almost an air of *bonhommie* to his demeanour.

As was the outward, so was the inward man. Mr. Gresham was a banker, possessed of large and increasing riches; and to these riches his heart was given. But, in him, wealth was not a sordid passion. He could be generous and lavish; he could give in charity, or assist struggling merit. If he was without warmth, he had kindliness. But all he did proceeded from one source. He lived in the eyes of the world. To *show* was his delight. As things *showed*, according to their degree of merit in that respect, so were they valued. This, perhaps, is no very uncommon quality; but there *was* something uncommon in the open simplicity with which his views were avowed. He had no concealments about it. His opinions were, in his eyes, as wise as they were cherished; and with perfect truth he expressed them. Like Mr. Bye-Ends, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," he would have said, with unhesitating satisfaction, "I am always most zealous for religion

when he goes in silver slippers; and love much to walk with him in the street, when the sun shines, and the people applaud him." This truthfulness redeemed his character from common-place worldliness; for where an amused smile is caused scorn is disarmed.

He now stood and gazed around him with a satisfied air. The room was over-lighted, if that is possible; the masses of gilding shone like pure gold; every article of furniture was profusely ornamented; and every article, and every ornament, had a double being in the light of the numerous mirrors. He was satisfied: not a fault was to be found. The eyes of the world would own, not only his wealth, but, what was more precious, how lavishly he spent it.

The door opened, and a lady entered; a pretty young woman, of about six-and-twenty; but, though pretty, very unlike Mr. Gresham or his room. She was ill-

dressed; walked ill; and seemed altogether ill at ease. This was Mrs. Gresham.

A slight frown contracted Mr. Gresham's brow, as she made her approach. His wife was the one thing that disturbed his comfort. Not that he was an unkind husband —in his way he had a real affection for her— but she offended his taste. There was no show about her. Even her prettiness had no show. She made no use of it.

There had been a time when his riches had not seemed so secure a possession as of late they had been; a time when, without any worldly desires, so, at least, it seemed to him, it was his duty to secure certain sums, over which the chances of life would have no power. At that time he married the pretty daughter of a millionaire, who had but lately struggled up into the eyes of the world; and who was, therefore, not aware of all that those eyes would demand from his children. Mr. Gresham

knew all the disadvantages under which his chosen one laboured. He knew she was uneducated; he saw that she had no grace or accomplishment. But she was young and pretty, simple and docile; whatever fancy he had was taken by her fresh beauty, and her grateful admiration of himself; and the rest he thought might be given. She only wanted an air, and a becoming sense of dignity to make her all he desired, and when once *his* wife, that would be an easy acquisition.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, as the case may be, there are some natures on which even the best instructions will not tell. After nine years of married life, after instruction and example, notwithstanding a blind admiration of her husband's superiority, and an intense desire to please him, Mrs. Gresham remained unchanged. Simple and docile, still, ungraceful and ill-dressed. Advancing years cultivated unconsciously the inner and moral being. She became more gentle,

loving, truthful, and refined; but she could not, with her best endeavour, learn worldliness; she could not be a fine lady; she could not understand her own dignity, or learn to have one thought of herself; it was a bad job, and Mr. Gresham owned it. On that one point his complacency was vulnerable. Untired, however, and undismayed, he persisted in his instructions, and Mrs. Gresham in her endeavour to learn.

With a scrutinizing air he inspected her this day, as she advanced towards him. It was a first dinner party in a new house All things shewed well. He expected his wife to do the same.

"My dear Marianne," he exclaimed, in grave displeasure, "your gown is shabby! What is the cause?"

"Is it shabby?" she said, colouring with penitence and regret, "I thought it was pretty. I thought it would do."

"Would do," he repeated, in calm contempt. "Once more, Marianne, let me

remind you that I choose to see you dressed as becomes your station. Look here," and he drew her towards one of the long mirrors, "ask yourself—is such a dress as this becoming the mistress of these apartments? You might be my housekeeper—scarcely my governess—never my wife."

He was quite right. Her dress was *not* becoming her station. Though composed of silk—and perhaps good silk—it was faded, tumbled, tastelessly trimmed, and badly put on. The poor thing coloured crimson again. She did feel out of place—she owned it.

"I am very sorry," she said gently, "I will order a new gown to-morrow."

"Not one new gown: order many. It is a remarkable thing that while most men complain of the extravagance of their wives, I cannot get mine to dress with decency. If, as some husbands do, I ordered you to dress, and gave you no means of doing so, it might be a different question; but how

is it with me? I say, go where you please, spend what you please, and command me. It is my pride and delight to put myself at your orders." His countenance glowed with satisfaction at his boundless liberality.

"You are very kind," his wife said, humbly and gratefully. "I wish I deserved it better."

There was a knock at the door; a "Come in," from Mr. Gresham; and a little girl, freeing herself from the hands of her nurse, bounded into the room.

"Come here, Angela," said her father. But the child did not notice him. "Mamma, mamma, dear mamma!" she cried, and springing to her mother's neck, clasped her arms about her, to the further detriment of the toilette.

"Come to me, Angela—come when I call you," Mr. Gresham repeated.

"I choose to stay with mamma," she replied wilfully, and retained her place.

"You must not, my darling," her mother

murmured in her ear. "Papa calls—to please me, go."

After a little consideration, Angela obeyed. She approached her father, and stood coldly and quietly by his side.

"I want to look at you," he said, twisting her round, and examining her dress. After a moment he added, with dissatisfaction, "You look after her dress no better than your own, Marianne. Let her have silk frocks, I am tired of this muslin. Every pauper can wear muslin."

"Angela does not like silk," observed his wife.

"Folly and nonsense, to talk of a child's taste. What can she know of the matter? I beg I may be obeyed."

"I won't have silk. I don't like it," the little girl said, vehemently; "it rustles so, and it makes Margaret tiresome. She tells me to be still and to mind my frock, and I don't like it. I don't like to take care—"

"Quite right, my little girl," cried her

father, delighted, "why should you take care? Tell Margaret not to talk nonsense. Tell her you may spoil as many frocks as you please, and that I don't want you to take care."

"But may I, really?" and Angela looked for an answer to her mother.

"You may, indeed; you have my leave for it. You shall have new silk frocks, and you may spoil them all as fast as you please."

"And you must give the old ones to Margaret's poor little nieces," suggested the kind mother—unconsciously dropping her balm into the poison of his words.

"Oh! mamma, may I indeed spoil my things as fast as I can? May I blow bubbles with my best frocks on; and may I dig a hole, and fill it with water; and may Margaret never tell me not to make a mess again? Oh! what fun it will be!" and she clapped her hands in rapture.

The trio were interrupted by the entrance of the first guest. It was a lady—and a fine

one, with a languid voice. After paying due attention to her host and hostess, she called Angela to her side.

"Come here, my sweet child, and tell me what will be good fun."

But Angela stood immoveable. She had strong tastes; and, at first sight, this lady displeased her.

"She is to have as many silk frocks as she pleases," her father observed, taking her reluctant hand, and leading her, mute and rigid, to his guest.

"Dear, how nice," said the lady, caressingly, "and what a lucky little mortal you are. My chicks will be so jealous; for they have but one or two silk frocks in a year."

"But I hate silk frocks!" Angela burst out vehemently; "and I didn't say it would be good fun to have them; and papa shouldn't have said I did, because it was a story."

Mr. Gresham laughed. His little girl's ways did not displease him. She was not,

indeed, what he intended her to be; but, at present, she fulfilled the object of life tolerably well; she attracted that is, her due degree of attention.

"Hush, my love," said her gentle mother, drawing her back, and seating her beside her, "that is not the right way to speak;" but the soft stroke of her curls, and the gentle touch on her fair, fat shoulders, spoke no lesson of displeasure.

She sat quietly while the party assembled. She was a lovely and a taking child, with a Hebe countenance of health and animation; and many were the attentions and compliments she received. But she was as capricious as a spoiled beauty in her choice. This night the party was not to her taste, and she made no concealment of her feelings.

An old gentleman watched her with amusement, and having seen her repulse with disdain the caresses of three good-looking young gentlemen and as many young ladies, who concealed their inward

merits under overmuch outward airs and graces, approached her to try his chance.

"May I kiss you?" he said, stooping towards her, "I should rather like it."

"Margaret does not like *everybody* to kiss me," she said, loftily, "but *you* may;" and she put up her blooming cheek to receive his caress.

"You are very kind to me," he said, seating himself by her side, with a smile, "and now will you tell me why you are kinder to me than to those young gentlemen yonder?"

"Because I like you best," she said readily.

"That is being very good-natured; particularly, as you don't know anything about me. Do you know it makes me such a vain old man, that I must ask you the reason why?"

"I like mamma twenty times better than papa," was Angela's not very pertinent answer.

"Oh!" he observed, not quite certain how this confidence should be received. "But I was not talking about your papa and mamma. I was talking about number one. Why do you like me? Is it because I have got a bald head, and an old coat, and no gloves, and a face all smothered in wrinkles," and he screwed up his features into a ridiculous caricature of age.

"Yes, yes!" Angela cried with delight, "that is why I like you best."

"Then I need not do so any more, to please young ladies;" and he drew down his nose and forehead till the wrinkled skin looked like a pavement.

Angela screamed, and clapped her hands; but seeing that she was noticed, and that one of the good-looking young gentlemen was moving towards her, she drew herself up, and became as cold and demure as a moment before she had been animated and gay.

The old man smiled at her youthful airs, and fell into a reverie.

In the dining-room he managed to place himself by Mrs. Gresham's side. He had an interest in the family, and some sleeping interest in the banking-house to which Mr. Gresham belonged; but ill health kept him generally abroad.

"I have been talking to that little lady of yours," he observed; when she relaxed her painful endeavours to play the lady of the house to a stranger at her side.

With cordiality and gratitude she turned to him at once. "I saw you and Angela making acquaintance; it was very kind of you. I am afraid she was not very good to night; but we must not expect too much. She is so young."

"She was quite good enough for me," he said, emphatically. "I am not fond of over sweet sugar-plums. She is the kind of animal—I beg her pardon—that I like to have to do with; full of life and character. What is her name?"

"Angela. She was called so after Mr.

Gresham's grandmother, who was, I believe, a very beautiful woman."

"She is badly named. There is nothing of the angel about her."

"You must not judge of her by to-night," Mrs. Gresham said, with anxiety, "indeed you must not. She was a little annoyed before you came, and she did not quite recover herself; but she is a good child in general; indeed she is!"

"My dear Madam," he said, with an impatient smile, "I can see that; a good child in her way, but no angel, nor would I wish to have her so. I hope some time to find the angels good company; but while I am a human being, human beings suit best with my infirmities. Miss Angela is a human being, and one which I fancy may some day give you a good deal of trouble."

The fond and simple mother again began her protestations and apologies; but they were received as if they were not heard.

"I don't know if you find it so," he con-

tinued, in a thoughtful tone, "but some people set me thinking. I cannot help picturing what their life and trials may be; that little lady of yours, for instance. As I watched her, my fancy went on into future days, days when questions of marrying and giving in marriage may arise. There will be trouble, I guess. She has a will of her own, and a rarer acquisition, opinions of her own: and in some cases this is not very convenient."

"Angela may be a little wilful, perhaps," said her mother, "but she is so affectionate and so generous, that it is always a pleasure to her to give up her will for those she loves."

"That's something—cultivate that; your little girl's safeguard will be in teaching her to love wisely and well. She needs education, let me tell you; not book-learning, but something to guide her good, wild heart. You must give her an anchor to rest upon; that life's trials may soften, not break her spirit."

"We all have our trials," observed Mrs.

Gresham, quietly, "please God, Angela may not have a large share."

"Amen, with all my heart. She is a taking little thing, and though I shall not probably live to see it, will be a lovely and interesting woman. If I held the thread of her destiny, I would spin her a full yarn without a knot or tangle in it. But after all this might not be for her good; and so we must be content to leave her in wiser hands than ours, for her pilgrimage through this sweet yet weary world." Perceiving that his conversation was little better than Greek to his simple hostess, the old man here paused, and the subject was changed.

Angela Gresham grew up.

Mr. Gresham was certainly unfortunate in the soil committed to his care and husbandry. He scattered his good seed as laboriously and unceasingly on the heart of his daughter as he had done on that of his wife, but with even less success. Mrs. Gresham received, and cherished the seed,

and it was no fault of hers that it withered and died. Angela, like the hard and beaten wayside, stubbornly rejected it.

Mr. Gresham had an ideal in his head: and to this ideal his daughter was to be formed. She was to be polished in manner, easy in conversation—a well-bred, well-dressed, showy and accomplished woman. To attain this object, no expense was spared. The all-importance of the world's opinion was held up unceasingly to her view; and father, mother, and teachers, all united in their endeavours, to season her impressible mind with vain-glory and self-conceit.

But all in vain. To learn, indeed, Angela submitted with a good grace, for she had an inquiring and intelligent mind; but she learned for the pleasure of learning, and rebelliously refused to exhibit, or even to make the best of her attainments. With quick intuition, she perceived her father's love for the world's estimation: and she early took the world to her utter scorn. Her

father cared for the world's words—she held all opinions in contempt.

There is always something noble in the eyes that look right through the shows of things, and are unsatisfied till the reality is found; but scorn of the world's ways, when held as a principle, is unsafe. A very host of rebellious and bitter thoughts Angela cherished in her breast, and in her scorn of show, many a wise restraint was cast away.

If left to herself, and to her father's influence, she might possibly have grown up, in spite of a truthful and virtuous nature, an unpleasing woman; but there was a counter influence at work, not the less powerful that it was unconscious.

Mrs. Gresham did her best, employed the full purpose of her mind to act with her husband, and ruin her daughter. Conscious of her own deficiencies, she contemplated with admiration those outward graces her husband approved, and assisted in all his attempts to turn a natural character into an

artificial one. This was what she endeavoured to do; but the unconscious influence, be it good or bad, is the active one. Soft as the falling of the dew on a tender herb, fell the influence of the mother's unworldly nature on the daughter's impressible mind. Too simple for systems, too unreflective for principles, Mrs. Gresham could not teach didactically, even the first elements of religious knowledge; but there is a natural religion of the heart which nothing can conceal; and humility, charity, and reverence flowed with never-ceasing flow from her thoughts, words, and actions.

In early days this influence was apparently without effect. Angela was a rebellious child; and her self-willed spirit startled her father and grieved her mother. To the latter, indeed, she was gentle, and though not submissive, loving; but her father she did not love; his ways she thwarted and opposed; and many a tear Mrs. Gresham shed in secret, as the clash of

opposing characters brought discord into her home. But then came a time of bitter trial; and with trial, reflection and remembrance. Mrs. Gresham died—the only being Angela loved. It seemed a hard deprivation; it seemed a loss as severe to her well-being, as to her happiness. Influenced only by love, stubborn to restraint, the loss of love seemed a loss irreparable. So man argues. So it seemed wise to argue; but this was not the only case in which man's arguments prove fallacious. Some influence more in death or absence than in presence; it was so with Mrs. Gresham. The dead mother guided where the living could not. *Alive*, Angela with her superior cleverness was the victor in every argument; *dead*, her mother's least remembered word vanquished her. *Alive*, example failed; the gentle submission of the wife to the husband irritated the daughter's soul; *dead*, Angela recalled, only to love that gentleness; and perforce was drawn to imitate. *Alive*, Mrs.

Gresham was no bond between the father and daughter; *dead*, she became so: for each in their measure mourned her, and in that sympathy found a kindred nature. Mr. Gresham loved his wife as much as he loved anybody, and grieved for her as much as he could grieve. It was not great, but in its measure it was sincere grief. He comforted himself by the splendour of her funeral; but the gaudy trappings of woe were not all show. A sad heart beat beneath. Angela's grief was wild, ardent, undisciplined; it was the loss of all to her; she was disposed to think that none grieved, none could mourn but her; but when, with a real tear in his eye, and a real tremble in his voice, her father told her to take her mother's place, she owned the reality of his sorrow, and a link, slight indeed, yet still a link, was knit between them.

Angela was fifteen when her mother died. From that time her character grew in various directions. Like a tree that has

lost its leader, her branches fell luxuriantly, but irregularly—producing a kind of picturesqueness on the whole, yet being not the less irregular. Something she lost in strength, much she gained in amiableness; self-will was still dominant, but it was no longer sole lord. She wished to please herself, and scorned most opinions but her own; but she also wished to be like her mother; she wished to be, for her sake, a tolerable daughter to her father; she wished also passionately, yet vaguely, to be good, and to follow her mother on the path to heaven. These opposing wishes, this strife of good principles, with faults and caprices, made her a mass of inconsistencies—and inconsistency is childish. She was sometimes like a woman, and sometimes a foolish child. More childish at sixteen than at ten, because more inconsistent.

CHAPTER V.

. . . As a child
She still was simple, rather shall I say
More simple than a child, as being lost
In deeper admirations and desires.
The roseate richness of her childish bloom
Remain'd, but by inconstancies and change
Referr'd itself to sources passion-swept.

EVE OF THE CONQUEST.

ON the sofa of the small drawing-room of a small house, on the road to Hampstead, lay a lady, of some age between fifty and sixty. Her appearance was sickly and shabby—such, also, was the appearance of the room; but it was a shabbiness of taste more than of necessity. There is a hue in every colour, too full to be delicate, and too pale to be decided, which good taste avoids; but it was this tone of colour which nature

had bestowed on Miss Price; and which she, following nature, chose for the adornment of her room and person. Her hair was a dull, dark flaxen; her complexion a sallow grey; her gown a muddy brown; her furniture a sickly blue. Her countenance was as insipid as her taste, devoid of character, and devoid of intellect; nevertheless, when closely scrutinized, it was not devoid of a certain charm, —it was gentle and patient; and her smile, the smile of a grateful and affectionate heart, had the power to light up and dignify her face. She was now lying on the sofa, with a shawl of salmon-colour over her feet, and a piece of sickly worsted-work in her hands.

At a little distance from her, her two arms leaning on a table, was a figure of a very different appearance. She was a young lady, healthful and lovely, and with no lack of taste or decision about her. The smoothness and roundness of her dazzling complexion, and the freshness of her air, betokened very early youth, sixteen or seventeen

at the utmost; but in other respects her appearance was womanly. The silk of her dress and the costly lace on her cloak were in a style uncommon to young ladies in general; and the ease and decision of her graceful figure seemed the acquirement of maturer years.

She was lovely rather than beautiful. Her hazel eyes bright and piercing; her auburn hair soft and silky; her colouring full and fresh. It was the beauty of animation and colour more than of feature: though it would have been hard to fancy a time when her countenance would cease to please.

At this moment there was discontent and dissatisfaction upon it; but it sat upon her with an air of piquancy. Her bonnet was thrown off; and as she pushed back her long thick curls from her face, she said, "My dear aunt Jane, the fact is, this life is a very weary life."

"I don't find it so, my dear," replied her

aunt, while with a look of interest she pulled out a needleful of olive-green worsted.

"And what makes you not find it so? Tell me, for it is what I cannot understand."

"The many things I have to be thankful for," and she put down her work, in grateful reverence to the words she said.

"You;—poor aunt Jane, and what have you to be thankful for?"

"My sight, my hearing, my tolerable health, my food and clothing, and your love my dear, besides many other things, which it would take me a long time to tell."

"In that view, I suppose I have things to be thankful for too—but I can't say I feel it."

"You have of course, my love, and many more than I have; you have youth and beauty, and riches . . . . ."

"Ah! now," said the young lady, decidedly, "stop there—don't say riches; the Bible says that money is the root of all evil, and I think so too." One day I heard a little boy in the street say, 'hang larning;' I don't exactly know what he meant; but since then

I sometimes say 'hang riches,' and it gives me pleasure."

"My love," said her aunt, with a look of sincere consternation, "do you know that is a very improper way of speaking!"

"Don't look so shocked, my dear aunt Jane, I mean no harm. I only mean that I wish all bags of gold were wound round with a rope, and chucked into the sea."

"Money is a very useful thing. I don't mean to say, my love," Miss Price added, with some perplexity, "that money is *not* the root of evil—of course not; but it is a useful thing, and we ought to try to do good with it."

"Do you know what makes me out of temper to-day?" the young lady said, without attending to her aunt's musings, "I mean especially out of temper—more than usual."

"You look very nice, my love," she replied fondly, putting down her worsted to examine her niece's countenance.

"But cross. Look again."

"You do frown, my love, certainly, but you don't mean it, I know."

"But I do mean it, and I must tell you why. Aunt Jane, did you ever wish to marry?"

"My love, my love," she said, fluttered and bewildered at the sudden question.

"Don't answer me, if you don't like it," said her niece, kindly, "all I want to be sure of is, that you can understand me when I ask you, if *you* could submit to marry anybody that was picked out for you, however little you cared for him."

"My love," replied her aunt, humbly, "I think I would rather not give an opinion on such subjects. My head is not particularly strong."

"To be bought and sold like a piece of land. I never, never will submit to it; and yet I don't well know how it is to be avoided."

"God will provide, dearest—we need not fret ourselves about our future lives."

"I see people bought and sold with my

own eyes," said the young lady with vehemence. "This is a vile world I live in. There is not one person in all the world that I look up to and respect; and yet, unless I respect, I never, never will marry: that is, so long as I can struggle against it."

"Certainly, my love; to esteem is the safest way; for we cannot esteem bad people, you know."

"Very true, Aunt Jane," said her niece, smiling; "but now let me tell you what has put me out of temper. Papa sent for me, yesterday morning, to speak to me. I went down to his room, and he told me two things. First, he told me a thing that made me very happy. He told me that he had bought a large property, and that henceforward we should live a great part of the year in the country."

"That will be nice, indeed, my love! You will see all the flowers, and hear the birds sing."

"Yes, and be *free*, Aunt Jane. If you

knew how I sometimes long to be free! I was so pleased that I said so, and thanked papa, and behaved like a very good, amiable daughter. And when he said he hoped as he had pleased me in this that I should be more obedient in future, and conform myself to his wishes, I said—Oh, yes, I would, indeed;—and I really meant and felt what I said: and then what do you think he said next?"

"Now you frown again, my love, and I am sorry to see it."

"He said the time would soon be approaching when he should wish me to marry; and that he hoped when the proper person appeared that I should behave myself as a dutiful daughter ought. My dear Aunt Jane, he said it as quietly as if he spoke of a new gown."

"Well, my love, I have heard that parents sometimes choose a very proper person; and I would not set myself against him on that account."

"I don't. Do you know that I am so sensible and unromantic that if the Bishop of London, who I suppose is a good man, was to bring me a person, and say, 'Here is a good man, wise and good, whom I am certain you can admire and respect,' I am so weary of scoffing and scorning that I would consent as dutifully as if I were four years old; but I cannot trust papa. Don't look shocked, Aunt Jane! sometimes we *must* speak the truth; and I know if you would speak the truth you would allow that you don't trust him either. Now look at me, and answer!"

"A father, my love, is a father; and I don't give opinions on such subjects. It is better not."

"Perhaps you are right. I do try myself not to express all I feel. If you could tell what a boiling indignation I sometimes have pent up here," and she pressed her hands on her heart; "but I must speak for once. I cannot trust papa's choice;

he would marry me to a post, if it were rich enough."

"Perhaps not, dearest. It is better not to distrust. Wait till the time comes, and don't fret till then. Did he say more? Did he speak of any person in particular?"

"No, he did not say; but I have a guess."

"And would it be a very unwelcome choice, my love, if you guessed right?"

"I don't know anything about it. I have a guess at the name; but I know no more who it is, nor what he is, than you do. And I was such a fool, aunt Jane—so astounded at what he said, that I did not say half what I thought and felt; and, besides, I don't know how it is, but I cannot argue with papa. He seems to think he must be right, and has such a contempt for everybody that does not think as he does. I am not afraid of him; I don't mind being in a passion, but somehow or other I feel like a slave. It seems no use. He treats every-

thing one says, however wise it is, as if a baby spoke it. Sometimes I think I shall go mad." She started up as she spoke, and walked impetuously to the window. When she came back, she said, "And so, Aunt Jane, you really are thankful for your life; and to me it seems *so* dreary. I wish I could feel as you do. No I don't. I would not feel contented with anything but perfect happiness for all the world. Do you never think life dreary."

"Days come and go, my love, and every day brings its great blessings. I have no right to be dreary. Just now I feel particularly thankful."

"For what?" asked her niece, quickly—

"For my fall, my love. Its—"

"For your fall! I call that truly wicked; one must *bear* pain, but I don't think we ever were intended to like it."

"I was going to say, my love," continued her Aunt, in the same placid manner, "that my fall has brought me a great good; and

so I am thankful, very thankful, even for the fall—"

"What can you mean? what great good?"

"A new friend, my love, and a kind one. I will tell you how it happened.—You know I slipped down in the mud, about twenty yards from my door; I was half stunned when I fell, and I could not get up. I heard little boys laughing; and I wondered how long I should lie there. It was not very pleasant. Then I heard a nice voice say, 'Don't crowd so—be off!' and then I felt strong arms lift me up; and then the kind voice said, 'Where shall I carry you?' so I just forced out 'Number 7,' for I was very faint; and then I don't know any more, till I found myself on this sofa, and a young man standing by me. Kitty was there too; but girls are so easily frightened, and he seemed sorry to see me with nobody but a frightened girl; and he was very kind, and told her to get some water; and then he

went himself for the doctor, and came back, and was very kind; and since then, I suppose, being sorry to see me all alone, he has called two or three times; and yesterday he sat down for a long time, and read me out of the papers about those dreadful riots. Altogether, he is particularly kind."

"He does seem kind, indeed," said the young lady; and the gaze with which she contemplated her aunt, though full of affection, seemed to own that she was no attractive object of a young man's benevolence. "That is the kind of thing I like to hear of; most people are kind, only for show, or for some selfish thing."

"Oh! my love, how you speak —"

"I speak what I think; it is a vile world I live in: but as to this young man, what sort of a young man is he? Is he young? and is he good-looking?"

"Not very good-looking, my dear. That is not what *I* call handsome," and she glanced about her room with a satisfied air,

as if her pride (poor humble thing) was in her taste. "His nose is too large, and his eyebrows are rather fierce; but, then, his countenance is very pleasant, and I thought his smile particularly sweet."

"I like a large nose, and fierce eyebrows," said her niece laughing: "there are sense and meaning in them. I should like to see your young man. Do you know what his name is?"

"He did send up a card one day, but I forget; it was Travers, I think; no, not Travers, but Vavers. I know I thought of two Vs. Vavers, or Vassour; no, that's not it, because of the two Vs. I forget, I am sorry to say."

"Not Vavasour?" asked the young lady, with a slight blush, and a look of curiosity.

"Yes, my love, that was it indeed. Do you know him?"

"Oh, no; only the name." She fell into a meditation; and as she mused, there passed over her countenance a furtive smile,

arch and mischievous. The fruit of her meditations appeared at last. "I should like to see your young man, Aunt Jane. When will he come again?"

"On Friday next, my love, he said he would call again, if he possibly could; and he was kind enough to say, that if there was anything interesting in the papers, he would bring one with him."

"I shall come to see him—that is, if I can. Now you are ill, I think papa will not refuse to let me come. I felt quite ashamed, when you said your friend seemed sorry to see you alone. And it *is* a shame, when you have a niece who could take care of you. I shall tell papa what I think."

"If he lets you come, my love, I shall be very grateful, but I shall not expect it."

"You may expect it, for I mean to come; but you must not be grateful, because this once I am not coming to see *you*, but out of mere curiosity. And now, good-bye.—

My dear Aunt Jane, what a hateful cat! Is that piece of work for your new friend?"

"My love, I would not take such a liberty for all the world. It is for the grocer's wife who has been very kind to me. She thought it a pretty thing, and so did I."

"I suppose it is well tastes differ in this world," said her niece with a smile, as she affectionately kissed her. "But how tastes come to be what they are, is past my understanding."

CHAPTER VI.

What will your kindred think?
ELIZ. What they will think?
What pleases them.
The Saint's Tragedy.

ANGELA Gresham arrived on the appointed day, but not quite in her own person. When she had thrown off a cloak and bonnet, she came and stood, with mirth dancing in her eye, by the side of her aunt's couch.

The placid aunt looked at her with a gaze of fear and wonder, and gasped out "My love!"

"How do you like me?" enquired Angela,

kneeling down by her sofa, and laughing at the amazed countenance.

"My dear child, what have you done to yourself?"

"This gown I am to give to a kitchen-maid, who is going to be married; and my cap is for somebody else. I brought them to shew you." Her gown was of some dark material, very plainly made; and her luxuriant curls were braided back beneath a neat cap of plain net, tied under her chin. The disguise of her dress was complete, yet it was by no means a disfigurement. The bright intelligence, and lovely colouring, were perhaps the more striking under the simple attire.

"Oh! my love, but why is this?" with a groan.

"I will tell you, Aunt Jane, if you can listen to a story. There is a poor young lady in London, who is very rich; twenty times a day, she is told how rich she is. Everybody who comes near her knows she

is rich, and this poor young lady never can tell whether she is liked for herself, or for her riches. Is not that a hard fate?"

"It is, my love," replied Miss Price, with a gleam of intelligence, "but she may be sure —"

"No, she cannot be sure; she is, on the contrary, very much afraid that all the flattery she receives is given to her riches; and for once she wishes to know what would be her fate, if she were poor. So I am come to see your stranger in this dress. Do you mind?"

"I am almost afraid, my love, I do."

"Then I am almost afraid I must do it whether you mind or not. So, dear Aunt Jane"—and she kissed her, "it will be no use for you to say any more."

"If it were not a disguise, my love, I should not mind, but disguises are dangerous things. I have often read of them: they are dangerous things."

"But this is no disguise. I am your niece, and if I lived with you, this is the way in which I should dress; and, indeed, if I had my will, I should dress in this way at all times. I am sick of ornaments. You see there is no harm."

"Your father, my love! I am afraid. . . ."

"Oh! never mind that. What I am doing, I guess, will please Papa very well.—He. . . . . but there is a knock—now dear Aunt Jane, only remember that you must not say who I am, nor call me by any name."

"I never do, my love. There is no fear."

Angela seized the hateful cat out of her aunt's reluctant fingers, and seated herself at a distance to work; but was scarcely seated before disgust at the monstrosity of the sandy cat on an olive-green ground made her jump up and restore it. A letter was then seized, which she tore up into strips for matches, as a means of employing her fingers.

The small maid of the house opened the door, and announced "the gentleman." It seemed to be the fashion of the establishment to suppress names in general.

Everard Vavasour entered the room, but paused at the door in some annoyance. His kindness to Miss Price had been in simple obedience to a kindly nature. Her apparently desolate position, though common enough, had touched one unaccustomed to such phases of life. For Everard was by no means adventurous in charity. Perhaps, to say the truth, his mind over-engrossed with one sphere of duty—the withstanding the baits of idleness and pleasure—was in some danger of becoming narrowed and self-contracted. Be this as it may, he had no taste for adventures, and felt annoyed and embarrassed at the sight of a visitor in the room.

After a second's pause, however, he came forward without looking to the right or the

left, sat down in the chair Miss Price had ordered to be placed for him, and enquired after her health.

She gave a favourable account, and then with gentleness and gratitude, thanked him for his kindness past and present.

He cut her short with a quick "I assure you I am glad to come," and then, like one not quite at ease, began to descant upon the weather.

When this came to an end, Miss Price said, "My niece;—will you allow me to introduce my niece?"

Angela blushed and bowed; and unable to restrain her smiles, cast down her eyes, and tore up her paper into fragments.

Everard looked at her for the first time; and with a gaze of surprise mingled with admiration. "Miss Price's niece!" In that insipid faded room, her freshness and brightness were singularly striking.

Still more embarrassed, however, at the

introduction, and uncertain whether it would be proper to address her or not, his conversation came to a pause. Retired and studious habits prevent the acquisition of an easy flow of discourse, and when there was nothing tangible to be said, Everard was often in the awkward predicament of having nothing he could say. On such occasions to pause and consider is fatal.

Miss Price relieved his embarrassment. "Those dreadful riots," she said, with placid interest, "I have thought of them so much; are they quite at an end?"

"Yes, quite. When soldiers appear, a mob is soon brought to its senses, or at least," he added smiling, "to good behaviour."

"You have nothing more I fear to tell."

"I think," he replied, colouring slightly, "you do not want my services."

"My niece, I am sure, will be happy to hear you. I beg your pardon; I fear I am too troublesome, but it was a great treat."

Everard hesitated, and while he hesitated, Angela raised her eyes, and said, "Your reading was a great pleasure to my aunt. I hope you will not deprive her of it, because I am here." She spoke with an ease and grace that astonished him beyond measure."

He acquiesced in the request; and though much inclined to laugh at the novelty of his position, pulled a newspaper from his pocket. It had been placed there for Miss Price's special entertainment.

The account he read was of a fire in some country town, and several acts of extraordinary heroism were related. He read with considerable spirit; a kind of reading likely to strike the inert senses of one like Miss Price. She listened with body and mind; and though her needle fell to the ground, forebore to mention the fact."

Angela listened, too, until she forgot herself; fixing her sparkling, speaking eyes on the reader. So fixed, Everard once sur-

prised them; and colouring, he knew not why, continued to read with a strange sensation.

When he had finished she burst out, "It does me good to hear of such things; it proves that *all* the world are not given up to selfishness."

"Were you afraid that such was the case?" Everard asked, smiling and amused.

"Sometimes I am."

"I should be sorry to think so," he said, and paused, hoping she would speak again.

But Angela was now alarmed at her boldness, and twisting and untwisting her matches, occupied herself in silence.

Everard withdrew his eyes, and listened for a few minutes to Miss Price's insipid remarks; but meanwhile his countenance gathered into thought. He was thinking deeply. Something within him was warning him, that this acquaintance had better be prosecuted no farther; the curiosity, the pleasure he felt, were in themselves warn-

ings; it required little forethought to point out difficulties and dangers that might ensue. Yet, on the other hand, there was the tempting plea of kindness and charity to invite him on.

The strong integrity of his character brought him to a rapid decision, and as soon as it was made, he put himself out of temptation by acting upon it.

"I am very glad," he said, suddenly rising and holding out his hand to Miss Price, "to see you so much recovered; and I hope," he added smiling, "you will never need such service as mine again."

"You are very kind, but," and she held fast the hand he had given—"I fear by the way you speak, this is your last visit—I know I should not expect . . . . I beg your pardon I hardly know what I meant to say."

"I shall not be able to call again at present, but I shall do so some day; and when I do I hope I shall find you quite well. Good-bye."

He stood for a moment doubtful, then went a few steps towards Angela, and held out his hand. In his moment's doubting he had decided that the civility was uncalled for; but he instantly acted in opposition to his decision.

If uncalled for, it was unexpected, and Angela blushed deeply as she gave her hand. Everard could not but observe that she did, and again with a strange sensation owned the impression that her beauty made.

"I think I am well out of this," was his thought as he left the house, but the "well out," was most reluctantly accomplished.

A silence followed his departure. Angela sat grave and thoughtful, and yet satisfied. Occupied with certain reflections of her own she did not for a few minutes observe her aunt. When she did so she saw her wiping away a few tears from her cheeks.

"My dearest Aunt Jane," she said, going hastily towards her, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing, my love, nothing of consequence. I felt a little disappointed for a moment, but it is over now. I know I expected too much. I thought I had got a new friend. Of course I was wrong. We ought not to presume."

"Oh! Aunt Jane, Aunt Jane, what a brute I am. All this comes of my selfishness. He will not come again because I am here. I am the cause of your loss!"

"And if you are, my love, is it not my great happiness that it should be so. Is a stranger like my own niece?"

"I almost wish that this visit had never been paid, and yet. . . ." and she blushed and smiled.

"Don't wish it, my love, on my account. It is over now, and I am quite thankful for the pleasure I have had, and some day may, perhaps, have again."

"I hope you will. Oh! Aunt Jane," she said, suddenly, "don't you sometimes wish you could pull down with your own fingers

the great curtain that hangs before time and see what is behind it?"

"No, my love," replied her Aunt, with simple philosophy, "trials come soon enough, and blessings are better when they come and surprise us."

"I am not sure, but no matter. Now good-bye. Did I tell you that Papa has given me leave to come once or twice a week while you are ill. Will that do as well as your stranger friend?"

"Oh! my love, every body is too kind to me, and I don't know how to be thankful enough."

"Poor thing!" was the reflection of the niece full of life and hope, clothed with health and wealth, and beauty, as she drove to her luxurious home. "What a life to have to be thankful for; and yet I *cannot* be thankful for mine!"

CHAPTER VII.

There stood a maiden near
Waiting to pass. In much amaze he stared
On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut. . . .
Then, wondering, asked her, "Are you from the Farm?"

TENNYSON—*The Brook.*

IN the garden of Audley Court, Robert Vavasour and Mr. Addison, (the clergyman of the parish) awaited the coming of Hope and Everard. It was an afternoon early in September.

Mr. Addison was about fifty, a grave and quiet man. Like his namesake, the *Spectator*, he had been distinguished all his life by a "profound silence;" but his silence

had nothing repelling; it was, on the contrary, an inviting silence, giving him admirable qualities as a listener and adviser. Observant, kindly, serious, and thoughtful, he made his way along his path of life—dropping as he could, and where he could, his words of sympathy, warning, or wisdom. "That man has a history," many said who watched his serious eyes, and slight, grave smile; but it was not so; that is, not according to the meaning of the phrase. His history was but the history of man in general. Some early hopes; some early wanderings; some disappointments; some pleasures; some deeper joys and sorrows scattered here and there; through these he had worked out experience in man's nature; wisdom to warn and soothe; patience with this world; and hope for a better.

He was seated now on a bit of terrace wall; observant as usual. His eyes were on Robert, and there was interest in their gaze. He watched his movements as he restlessly

wandered to and fro. He was going from bed to bed, from bush to bush, gathering flowers, at random, as it seemed, yet evidently guided by some taste or fancy. He picked a bunch of the prettiest the garden afforded; then paused; and after some examination of the bunch, selected two. These he placed with care in his button-hole; the rest in all their freshness and beauty were cast away, some trampled under his foot.

"So will the good dispositions of his heart be thoughtlessly thrown away." Thus Mr. Addison silently mused, and there was a sigh in his heart, though it made no sound. For he only, undazzled by the force and charm of his penitence, saw the old nature, the old lack of principle, apparent as ever within.

Robert now came towards him, swinging his cane and switching the bushes as he walked along. His air was more thoughtful than usual; and once or twice he looked at his chosen flowers with a kind of softness in

his gaze. Mr. Addison's eyes fell on them also, and a thought, no new one, passed through his mind. Why had his choice been made? The flowers were a white carnation, without spot or stain, and a white rose with the faintest and softest blush in the centre. Was there something in his nature to which the purity of those flowers appealed? Were they emblems of another love struggling with his worser qualities?

"Are you tired of waiting, Mr. Addison?" Robert said.

"No, where are the others?"

"My father called Hope to write a letter, and Everard is at his toilette. He fell into a ditch when he was shooting, and did not think himself smart enough for our company."

"Were you not shooting, Robert?"

"Not to day. What do you think I have been doing to day?"

"I cannot guess."

"Drawing a saint," he said, with a slight

flush on his cheek, "that is, taking Hope's picture."

"And have you succeeded?"

"No! how should I?" he replied, in a peculiar tone, "I have not the key."

A silence succeeded; both remained thoughtful. Robert disturbed the stones in the gravel-walk, dug them up, and trampled them in again. At length he said, "I liked your sermon yesterday, Mr. Addison."

"Did you listen to it, Robert?" Mr. Addison said, seriously; "that is not usual, is it?"

"No, it is not; that I confess. I listened for a reason. That bit at the beginning took my fancy; that picture of charity. It was a quaint bit, and I thought like Hope. Did you think of her when you wrote it?"

"It was not mine—it was from Jeremy Taylor."

"Did you think of her?" he repeated.

"No, but it is like her, as all pictures of heavenly charity must be."

"People talk of the impossibility of perfection," Robert began with some vehemence, "but they talk stuff, or they have not seen Hope. Whoever of us is so happy as to reach the kingdom of Heaven will find nothing there in body or spirit more perfect than her."

"I almost feel as you do, Robert. Do you like the picture of what we may find there?"

Robert coloured a little, then with unwonted seriousness, though with excitement, replied, "Is it not strange Mr. Addison, that those who see virtue in a form so lovely, that they are compelled to worship and adore; yet cannot yield to its influence, nor follow it."

"It shows at least, dear Robert," said his companion, with a grave tenderness in his voice, "that the mind is heaven, though the flesh may yet be earth. The day will come when both together will worship."

"You think better of me than I deserve," Robert said, with some passion. "I admire,

but I do not know that I even wish to imitate."

"Cherish, then, the admiration as the best gift of God. To admire good is to be good, at least in a degree."

A silence again followed. Robert still pursued his occupation of disordering and re-adjusting the stones in the walk.

Thought—some internal conflict, was evidently at work within. Mr. Addison guessed its nature—guessed it still more nearly, when he saw the light on his countenance when Hope appeared from the house. But he made no attempt to draw his feelings from him. There was that in his serious kindness which invited confidence, but he himself had a dread of confidences reposed before the time.

Hope was followed by Everard. Robert and Mr. Addison went forward to meet them.

A long walk was in prospect. Its object was to visit Underwood, the house and property lately purchased by Mr. Gresham.

By the road it was three or four miles from Audley Court, but across the two parks, which were united and separated by a little wood, a little stream, and a little bridge, not two. A maid of the house had been dangerously ill in the preceding week, and Mr. Addison had attended her. He wished to visit her on her recovery, and many ludicrous reports of the magnificence of the house and furniture having reached Audley Court, Robert, a being of universal curiosity, had expressed his intention of accompanying him.

"Now let us be off," he said, shaking off his thoughtful mood without effort; "if Mr. Gresham should chance to be arrived, and we are caught prowling about, our guilt lies on Mr. Addison's head. Mr Addison, are you prepared to bear it?"

"The housekeeper assured me he was not expected till Wednesday; I think there is no fear."

"After all, if we *are* caught, what does it

matter, we can but say 'I hope I don't intrude.'"

"We are the only people who have not seen Underwood," Everard remarked, "so at least Stephens says. He went there yesterday, and is in such a frenzy of admiration, that I confess I am curious. I am sure he expects Mr. Gresham to arrive in a coach and six."

"And so he will, I dare say," said Robert, laughing, "or the Lord Mayor's coach if he can get it. He is such a fool."

"You have never seen his daughter, have you Robert?" enquired Hope.

"No, never. I have only seen Mr. Gresham twice. He invited me to dine with him, but I thought it would be a bore, and declined. She is very pretty I hear, and immensely rich I know. It is a fine opportunity for Everard. I thought of that as soon as ever I heard of her."

"No thank you; no heiresses for me, I hate them."

"That's all nonsense, a bit of Vavasour pride. I have always had a conviction that you would marry an heiress; I bet you twenty pounds you do."

"And I bet you twenty thousand I don't," with some unnecessary vehemence.

"I am too honourable to take it," Robert replied, amused. "I foresee .... However, upon the whole, I agree with you in hating heiresses. Not because of what my father tells us about our forefathers, but from a feeling of my own, which is a better guide than the feelings of my ancestors. I don't like a woman with money any better than I like a clever woman. Talents and money both put them too forward."

"That is making yourself a lord of the creation indeed," Everard said, laughing.

"Lords are better than ladies, are they not, Hope? Women were made for better things than to be clever."

Before they reached Underwood, Robert endeavoured to shake the nerves of his com-

panions, by picturing the awkwardness of their situation, should the new possessors have already taken possession of their abode.

Mr. Addison again assured him there was no fear; but as it happened, Robert's anticipations were realized.

The shady paths of the wood emerged at once into the pleasure-grounds that skirted the inner garden; and before any precautions could be taken, Mr. Gresham and his curious visitors came face to face. He was walking down a broad gravel walk, about a quarter of a mile from the house, in apparent meditation or contemplation. His hands were joined under his coat-tails, his nose was uplifted, and an air of serene rapture sat upon his countenance.

The direction in which his eyes were turned, might have given his guests an opportunity to draw back unseen; but to escape, Robert had no desire. He made, indeed, movements and grimaces of consternation, which almost overset the gravity

even of the grave people who accompanied him; but he stood his ground, and when the eyes came down from their upward flight, and Mr. Gresham became aware of the presence of strangers, he went forward with outward courteousness, though inward mirth, to explain the circumstances of the intrusion.

His reception was overwhelming in its politeness. Mr. Gresham would not hear of apology. He was happy in, he was grateful for, their coming. The advantage of associating with individuals bearing the name of Vavasour, had been his chief inducement in the purchase he had lately made. Anything that hastened that end was welcome to him. Intrusion was a word he could not permit; then, and always, he hoped Mr. Vavasour would make himself at home at Underwood.

With demure gravity Robert thanked him, and then begged to be allowed to introduce his companions. "This is Mr. Addison," he said, "the clergyman of this parish; and

though as a clergyman he ought to have known better, I feel it my duty to say that he was the guilty cause of our indiscretion to-day."

"I hope," said Mr. Gresham, blandly and bowing low, "that I shall profit by your future instructions as much as I have profited by those given to my young friend to-day."

Mr. Addison only bowed. He had nothing to say.

"This," continued Robert, "is my cousin Hope Linton, and this is my brother Everard."

"I look forward, Miss Linton, with satisfaction to the advantage my daughter will inevitably derive from your society." This was the speech that accompanied the bow to Hope—to Everard it was:—"I anticipate nothing but pleasure from the hope of adding another of the name of Vavasour to my list of friends."

Having made his guests duly welcome, he invited them to return with him to the house.

His address was to Robert. Robert was evidently the object of his idolatry. Robert, however, referred it to Hope; and Mr. Gresham was then profuse in his apologies for the omission of which he had been guilty.

Hope's consent was given in few words.—She had no feeling of her own on the subject; no shyness, no fear of intrusion. She looked into Robert's face, and saw he was desirous to go on, and was content.

Mr. Gresham led the way, attended by Robert and Mr. Addison. Everard and Hope followed. Mr. Gresham explained, as they walked along, the cause of his unexpected arrival.

"I was threatened on Saturday with a cold in my head; I have a particular objection to a cold in my head. My medical adviser recommended change of air. I left London, therefore, with my daughter, and slept at a remarkably excellent inn about forty miles from here. And there," bowing to Mr. Addison, "I made a point of

passing Sunday, and attending Divine service."

"I hope your cold is better, Mr. Gresham," Robert asked.

"A complete cure. There is something very refreshing in the air of the country. We arrived here this afternoon; and I confess I already feel satisfaction in my late purchase, and promise myself much pleasure from my abode here, not the least part of which will be derived from my acquaintance with you, Mr. Vavasour, and your family."

Underwood was, as has been already said, the picture of a "country seat." It was a square, white, stone house, with two long lower wings. There was no especial charm about the place, but it was bright and fresh; and as the garden was full of flowers, and the park was prettily wooded, it had a certain degree of attraction.

Mr. Gresham evidently admired it exceedingly, and as they entered the house, observed, *en passant*, that there were four-

and-twenty windows from wing to wing, which he believed was a large number. "How many windows were there at Audley Court?"

"I never counted," Robert said, with assumed interest, "but I will as soon as ever I go home. I am sure, however, there are not four-and-twenty."

"No," observed Mr. Addison, with a desire to make himself agreeable also.

"Ah!" said Mr. Gresham, "I was told it was a large number."

He led his guests into the drawing-room, and for a moment, put his hands under his coat-tails, and elevated his nose, while he observed the effects of the *coup d'œil.*

It was a long and very handsome room, magnificently, though tastelessly furnished; every slab and table glittering with *ormolu*, like Howell and James'.

"What a very fine room!" Robert said, never at a loss to express what was expected

of him, but giving a side glance to Hope and Everard.

"It usurps to itself, you see, a large portion of those said windows," Mr. Gresham observed, jestingly.

"You must have bought up all the silk and satin in England to make the curtains," Robert replied.

Mr. Gresham smiled, and then said he would call his daughter. "Pray, Miss Linton, be seated. Gentlemen all, I hope you will make yourselves at home."

"Say something witty, Everard, that I may relieve myself by a good laugh," was Robert's request.

"You are too bad," was Everard's reply. "He cannot be such a fool as not to see you are laughing."

"I never made an acquaintance which gave me half as much pleasure as I anticipate from this one; what do you expect the daughter to be?"

"Something very fine," said Everard, "there is no doubt about that! Here they come."

There certainly was no doubt about the fineness. Angela's silk flounces rustled, and her chains and bracelets rattled as she came in; but it was not her fineness, it was her beauty that struck every eye. She held her bonnet in her hand, and her luxuriant auburn curls fell about her face and shoulders. An air of shyness and diffidence, curiously mixed with mirth and expectation, gave a charm even greater than usual to her appearance, and a brighter colouring to her cheeks.

"My daughter, Miss Linton, Mr. Vavasour;" and then waving his hand around, he carelessly named Everard and Mr. Addison.

Angela blushed more deeply. She hardly raised her eyes as she returned the bows of each, and as if to make her escape, hurried to Hope, and smiling held out her hand.

There was nothing conventional in Hope's

manners. It would not have occurred to her to say she feared they had taken Miss Gresham by surprise, or any other polite phrase, but pleased with the frank cordiality of Angela's manner, she said simply, "I am glad to make acquaintance with you."

Angela sat down beside her, and began hurriedly to talk. She did not dare look up. What she had so lightly done, alarmed her now by the thought of its boldness.

Everard, meanwhile, had seen her with a sudden throb of pleasure. Her face had been the first which had much impressed his youthful fancy; and being the first, the impression was not even after two months entirely effaced. Yet, after the first instant of recognition, her air and general appearance was so totally different to the vision of his memory, that he laughed at himself for the moment's folly. The process of remembering and laughing was, however, repeated a second time. Again, a third time, he examined her with puzzled cu-

riosity ; and again the half recognition was on the point of changing to derision, when Angela looked up and met his scrutinizing gaze. She blushed deeply, and immediately cast down her eyes ; and this time the likeness to a former recollected movement was so exact, that he suddenly moved towards her and exclaimed—"Surely I have seen you before ?"

"Yes," she said, instantly regaining her self-possession. "I was not certain that you remembered me."

"I did," he said, doubtingly, "and yet I did not. Even now I am puzzled. How is it ?" And he looked at her with perplexity.

It is conscience that makes a coward. An answer to his perplexity was not difficult ; but Angela's conscience gave her a panic, and instead of replying, she blushed, looked annoyed, and made Everard, ever backward and sensitive, fearful that he had been presuming.

He stood by her in silence for a moment,

then said, with constraint, and because he thought he ought to speak, "I hope Miss Price is better."

Mr. Gresham was engaged with Robert, but at this name he turned round. "Are you acquainted with Miss Price?" he asked of Everard, with cold surprise.

"Yes, papa," Angela said, with a quickness that relieved Everard from the fear of having given offence. "Mr. Vavasour was very kind to my aunt. I met him one day at her house."

"Indeed," he said, with uneasy politeness, "I am happy to hear Miss Price keeps such good company."

Miss Price was his wife's half sister, the daughter of her mother, not of her father, born many years before Mrs. Gresham. She was poor, and without grace or charm to attract the eyes of the world. Mr. Gresham had thought it right, and his bounden duty, therefore, to ignore as far as possible the relationship; and it was only since his wife's

death that his softened feelings had permitted Angela to keep up a slight acquaintance with her.

Now that he had been discovered, however, with a poor relation, he thought it best to put a good face on the matter, and Miss Price was the cause of his bestowing some attention on Everard.

"Miss Price," he said, in a jesting tone, and in a slight degree elevating his nose, "does not trouble herself to keep exactly the society most suited to her station. In consequence, we meet but seldom. She is, however, an estimable person, and charitable, I understand, beyond due bounds."

"I did not know Miss Price was connected with you till this moment," Everard replied. "She seems very good, and I was glad to be of service to her."

"I am sure she must have been duly sensible of the honour of your attentions; and I wonder she did not think it worth while to communicate the matter to me. I

think also my daughter might have spoken on the subject; but better late than never, and I am happy in having this opportunity of offering you my thanks in person."

His chest heaved with the pride of virtue in thus taking the obligation to Miss Price upon himself; and having done his duty, he returned to Robert.

Angela had listened tranquilly to the conversation until her father's last observation. When he named *her*, she blushed, and turning quickly to Hope, began to talk to her. Everard saw the change, and could not help wondering what the cause might be.

The next movement of Mr. Gresham was to offer to show his guests the house; and having performed this office with a truthful and genuine delight in the *newness* and magnificence of all he exhibited, he then gave them his company into the garden and a part of the way homewards.

In the garden, Mr. Addison, who had been to pay his purposed visit, rejoined them.

During his absence, Robert having been Mr. Gresham's special property, Everard and Hope had, through their peregrinations, been accompanied by Angela; but though Everard and Angela were already on easy terms, no recurrence had been made to their former meeting. Everard wondered at her silence on the subject, but could not a second time obtrude remarks which evidently were not desired.

When the wood was reached, at the entrance of which Mr. Gresham had first met his guests, he suffered them to take leave of him. His parting speeches were as polite and almost as elaborate as his greetings had been. Yet with some persons to be elaborate is no proof of insincerity; it is the habitual tone and form of their feelings, and so it was with Mr. Gresham.

As he proceeded home with his daughter, he enlarged on the gratification he had experienced during the visit. "Those are charming young people, Angela; I hope you

are as much prepossessed in their favour as I am?"

"Yes, I like them all," she replied, with warmth.

"I am glad to hear it. It is my wish that you should cultivate their society in every way they will permit. I understand from Mr. Vavasour, that he and his brother remain in this neighbourhood for three weeks. It is a fortunate circumstance, and I wish you to avail yourself of this opportunity for forming an acquaintance with them. The Vavasours are a remarkably old family—highly connected, and much esteemed by the world. I feel pride and pleasure in my neighbourhood to Audley Court, and I shall do so in any connexion I may hereafter make with the family. But of this enough. I shall show my respect to the elder Mr. Vavasour by calling on him to-morrow: though in point of etiquette I believe he ought to be the first to wait on me."

If, with something of dread, Angela had

awaited the expression of her father's sentiments, she now with hopeful heedlessness cast all fear aside. The appearance of two Mr. Vavasours had indeed deranged many a pre-conceived idea; and a very decided leaning towards one, not diminished by her father's apparent leaning to the other, had made her expect and fear a more clearly expressed admonition regarding a future connection. Since it was not given, she was herself willing to leave the future in uncertainty.

The remainder of the party walked home together, until Mr. Addison's way diverged from the path to Audley Court. When they separated, and he wished his young companions good-bye, Everard said he would walk with him homewards.

"I am glad of this new acquaintance," was Mr. Addison's remark as they went on together, "and chiefly on Robert's account. I have sometimes feared the uniformity of

life at Audley Court might be too monotonous for one of his lively disposition."

"I suppose a lively disposition makes its own life," Everard said, "for certainly Robert does not appear to feel it dull. There are, however, other causes for that. Loved and appreciated as Robert is, it would be strange if he were not happy."

"He seems to be well aware of the beauty of Miss Linton, both in person and character."

"Yes," Everard said, with a smile.

"Do you not feel, as I do, that her influence will prevail. She will give him her soul, and her good spirit will bring all the chaos of his nature into order."

"I have not, I never had a doubt of it. It is not within the bounds of possibility that any one who loves what Hope is, can have anything but the best of natures within him."

"I am glad of this acquaintance also on

your account, Everard;" Mr. Addison continued, pursuing the train of his own thoughts. "It pleased me to see you to-day. You were not quite yourself."

"How you watch, Mr. Addison!" Everard said, colouring. "What have I done to-day unlike myself?"

"You were less grave than is common to you in society, and I was glad to observe it. You study too hard, Everard, to be able to do without recreation. The mind becomes hard and tough; it needs unbending."

"What do you think of Miss Gresham?" Everard enquired, after a moment's thought.

"She has a very sweet countenance; one that promises truth, and ingenuousness, and many virtues. She is somewhat undisciplined, I should suppose, in mind, as in manner, but life soon softens and tames. She seems disposed to be friendly with you, Everard. I am glad of it. I know no recreation so likely to be useful to you as the society of an amiable young woman. It is

refining both outwardly and within. Your habit is to keep yourself too much aloof."

Everard coloured again. He had an inward warning that the society of a young woman would *not* be useful to him in the present case; and as he walked home alone, he questioned himself with some seriousness. Self-examination, though honest, is not however always useful. It can deal well with an acknowledged feeling, or a strong one, but there are in the mind, fancies, shoots, and bubbles of feeling, which examination disperses like the sun the mist. When Everard came to question the pleasure he had felt and was anticipating from Angela's society, the vague dangers seemed to fade away. There was nothing which on examination portended more than pleasure; and having very honestly examined himself and been satisfied, he cast away the burthen of thought, and went resolvedly into the chances of the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

A figure like Aurora, flushed with joy.
HENRY TAYLOR.

A silent and a loving woman is a gift of the Lord, and there is nothing so much worth as a well instructed mind.
Book of Ecclesiasticus.

MR. GRESHAM paid his visit to Audley Court on the following day. He looked about him with eager curiosity, as he drew near. It was the scene and sphere of the day-dreams he had been lately building, and had it come short of his expectations, great disappointment must have ensued.

But disappointment was not in store. It is true that the narrow income of the Vavasours was apparent both in the keeping and the furnishing of their abode; there was a large sphere for improvement, but this was no objection to Mr. Gresham. He, in common with most people, loved to create; and certainly did not think with dissatisfaction of the show which his future labours would make in the eyes of the world. With something of joy and pride, therefore, he marked the inferiority in general style and polish to his own Underwood; while, at the same time, his senses were excited and impressed by the antique grandeur of the building and the magnificent trees that formed the avenue to the house. The old towers especially caught his fancy, and as he pictured the hour when he should stand in a paternal relation to their majesty, his soul became almost too big for the feeble confines of his body.

He was received by Mr. Vavasour with the grave and courteous grace that belonged

to him; he too was calculated to impress the imagination, and though a speculation as to the probable short term of his life, had occupied Mr. Gresham while he drove along, it vanished in the presence of his stately and venerable age.

Somewhat awed, however, by the same stateliness, he dexterously presented his daughter to Mr. Vavasour, and devoted himself to his less awful wife. The arrangement answered well. Mrs. Vavasour was gracious in manner and easy to entertain; and Mr. Vavasour had an old man's love for youth and beauty, and a grave nature's pleasure in gaiety of spirit.

When the visit came to a conclusion Mr. Vavasour made a request that Angela might remain, promising that his niece and his sons should escort her home. Angela's eyes sparkled with delight. Mr. Gresham equally gratified gave his ready acquiescence. The request seemed to bring certainty to his desires, and as he looked back from the

carriage on the old, dark towers, no doubt of his future relationship troubled the sweetness of his dreams.

Angela was quite as much impressed by the appearance of Audley Court as her father was. *Her* peculiar taste was gratified as much as his; for the glitter of gold was absent; the fashionable ornaments of the day had failed to penetrate the old abode; and the handsome frames of the pictures and mirrors were sober with age. The house being as it was, these things were not unsuitable; though there was simplicity, there was freshness, and though a lack of ornament, no lack of comfort; yet, undoubtedly, a luxurious taste would have found much to criticise.

When Hope, at Angela's request, had conducted her to every part of the rambling building, they entered the garden together, and walking quietly, began to converse. The dissimilarity of the young companions was very striking.

"I am quite sorry to have been here,"

Angela said, looking about her. "I was so pleased with Underwood yesterday, and now I think nothing of it. How much prettier this is."

"One is old, the other is new. Both are pretty in their way," Hope replied. "Why compare?"

"I always compare. I cannot help it; and what falls short of what it should be, I utterly condemn."

"But so many things are pretty in themselves. It seems a pity not to like them for their own sakes."

"But I only wish to like what is best," Angela said, with decision. "If one likes everything that is a little pretty, one's taste becomes poor and false. I only wish to like what is *very* good."

Hope was silent. She was not fond of argument; and unless some point on which she felt strongly was touched, unable to cope with others in arguing. Not so Angela. Her mind was full of thought, and where she

could hope to meet with novelty of opinion, her unexpressed sentiment was "Let me not burst in ignorance."

"I like to do the same with *characters*," she began again. "I know what I think good, and I know what I like. By comparing and comparing, I hope at last I shall find something perfect, or almost perfect, and then I shall be happy."

"I would so much rather not compare," Hope now said, with more interest in her voice. "There is so much that is good in every character, that I think we should appreciate it when we find it,—not without wishing for, more certainly, but still liking what there is."

"Do you think there is much good to be found?" Angela asked doubtingly. "I find very little."

"I am sure there is."

"Where? I look and look, but I cannot find it. I think you are good, and Mr. Addison and I should think Mr. Everard

Vavasour was good; but I cannot say I think goodness is a common thing."

There was a slight flush on Hope's cheek, perhaps of pain, in the selection or the omission of a name. It was perceived but not understood by her companion.

"Do you think me wrong for speaking as I do?" Angela asked, anxiously. "I don't mean anything very wrong. I only mean that I think people's motives very mean, low, and mercenary, and I scorn them, and I can't help it. Do you never scorn?"

"I don't think I do. I am too sorry for people, to scorn them."

"But are you sorry for bad people? I am sorry for good people in distress, but I cannot care for bad ones. I am not good myself, that I know very well; but I must say that vice, and wickedness, and meanness, I utterly abhor."

"What is *really* bad I do not speak of, of course," Hope said, after a little thought, "but most, I think, have good souls, tried

and tempted with many temptations; and," she continued with an earnestness that was almost passionate, "to save a good soul from its temptations, I would die if I might."

Angela looked at her young companion with reverence and surprise. "I like what you say," she said, "though I cannot feel it. How is it that you, who are so good, are so kind, while I, who am bad, am bitter and harsh?"

"People are different," Hope said, smiling. "I could not be harsh if I tried. I am not good, because of that."

On their return to the garden, they met Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour coming to meet them. Mr. Vavasour was anxious about Angela's return home, and said his sons were later than he expected. They all strolled together towards the gate that opened into the park; and sons, keepers, dogs, and game shortly appeared.

Not perceiving the group in the garden, Robert and Everard walked slowly. "They

are tired," Angela said. "What will they say to the engagement you have made for them?"

"My sons are never tired," Mr. Vavasour said, with something of pride in the hardy spirits he had nurtured.

"Or if they are," Mrs. Vavasour added, "I hope they have enough of an old-fashioned thing called chivalry, to forget it in this service."

She looked with a kind glance of admiration at Angela. The half implied compliment, expectation, curiosity, the novelty of all she saw, lit up Angela's countenance, and it was bright and sparkling as it met the first glances of the two young men.

"She is uncommonly pretty, I must say, Everard," was Robert's remark, as he hurried on.

He approached her with the fearless manner of one accustomed to please. Everard with something more like the chivalry of which his mother spoke.

"I have made an engagement for you, my boys," said Mr. Vavasour. "Miss Gresham remained here this afternoon under a promise on my part, that you would conduct her safely home."

"Miss Gresham has only to command us, and we will obey," said Robert. "I speak in Sir Charles Grandison's style for both Everard and myself."

"Then, if Miss Gresham has no objection to your present style of dress, it is growing late, and you had better be gone."

From Angela's answer, it appeared that though she had often read of a shooting dress, she had never seen it, or any other accompaniments of shooting before; for in those days, a shooting dress was not the common dress of man.

The specimen this confession of ignorance afforded of her London education, gave Robert much amusement. Though acquainted with almost all kinds of good and bad society, and possessed of what is called

knowledge of the world, there was yet alive in him something of a school-boy's nature; ready to spring up whenever freedom from dangerous excitements left him at leisure to be himself. He found, therefore, a boy's gratification in playing upon Angela's simplicity, in astonishing her with marvellous tales, and drawing from her, her general notions of life; notions chiefly formed from books, and not the best; for London and Brighton had been almost the sole spheres for her observation.

Angela was little accustomed to be amused. She was too lately grown up to have been able to effect a change at home; and as like clings to like, the society at Mr. Gresham's house was in average liveliness not much above himself. Robert's conversation was to her "like a play;" and the more her merriment acknowledged his powers, the more animated did he become.

In the course of his anecdotes, he gave her a graphic and ludicrous account of the

adventures of a friend of his who had one night assumed the disguise of a ballad singer in the streets of London. Excited by her amusement at what he related, he was proceeding to narrate the history of a disguise, planned and to be executed by himself, of a more serious description than the first.

"But this," he interrupted himself, "did not come off, to my great and everlasting regret. I was dissuaded by the grave judge, Mr. Everard Vavasour, and gave up my own opinion in humble submission to his."

"I hate plots and disguises," Everard said, quickly.

Angela suddenly withdrew her eager eyes and blushed rosy red. Not that she owned to a disguise. She denied it; but conscience, quick and true, made its confession upon her cheek.

All her companions saw her change of countenance. Everard, with some surprise, but without notice. Robert was less discreet.

"Miss Gresham," he said playfully, "what

a guilty face! While I have been entertaining you to the best of my powers, I believe you might have been entertaining me, with the history of one of those very plots and disguises Everard condemns."

"Indeed I could not," she said, hastily; but blushed more deeply as she spoke.

She was very uncomfortable. What must Everard think? After a moment's reflection, however, she remembered that appearances were nothing, if a person was really innocent; and shaking off her embarrassment, she observed, boldly, "I think such things must be very amusing."

"If done well, and with spirit they are," Robert said. "My friend, the ballad singer, says, he never had better fun in his life. The danger is when they are undertaken by people who are not up to it; and then nothing can be more flat and unprofitable."

They walked on a few steps; then Angela's uneasy mind asked this question. "Why do you condemn all disguises, Mr. Vavasour?"

Everard coloured at this expression of interest in his opinions, but answered, resolutely, "*Condemn* is a severe word. I only spoke of my own feelings. I hate all tricks and disguises. If they are complicated it is difficult to keep to the truth, and I hate falsehood. Besides, they are generally mischievous and sometimes dangerous."

"There, Miss Gresham," Robert said, laughing. "Now if your conscience confesses that you have been guilty of putting on a disguise, Everard has pronounced your doom without mercy."

"I have not," she said, with decision and displeasure. "I don't confess it."

Robert had too much tact to press the matter farther, but Angela was uncomfortable; in her discomfort became grave, and conversation flagged.

When they reached the borders of the wood, she stopped and insisted on her companions hurrying homewards, as the sun was sinking fast.

All demurred, for the engagement had been to see her home. "You must," she said, playfully and peremptorily, "or I shall think you cannot trust me."

"I am afraid I cannot," Robert said, with a mischievous look which he could not resist.

"Let us go, Robert," Hope said, struck by the appearance of annoyance on Angela's countenance.

Everard saw it too and with perplexity. In vain he told himself he had no business with the matter. He felt a singular desire to penetrate the mystery.

The progress to Underwood had been slow. It was now really growing late; and after parting with Angela, Everard, who was famous for his quick walking, hurried home. The hours at Audley Court were early, and Mr. Vavasour encouraged punctuality, not so much for its own sake, as for the exercise it gave to an unselfish and respectful tone of feeling. His sons, Robert as well as Everard, in this respect endeavoured to please him; and

it was Robert who now despatched Everard to give notice they should be in time.

"I have been wondering, Hope," Robert said, as they walked on alone, "how it is that Miss Gresham finds me so witty and wise, and all my wit and wisdom is lost on you."

"Oh, Robert," she cried, eagerly, "don't say so. I like to listen to you."

"But you never laugh."

"I can't laugh," she replied. "Something prevents it."

"Who or what prevents it? I want to know."

"I can't tell," she replied, after a moment's thought. "I only know what I feel."

"I wish I could see into that mysterious mind of yours, Hope," Robert said, smiling, "I believe I should find curious things there."

"Do you wish me to laugh more?" Hope asked, suddenly fixing her anxious eyes upon him.

"I; what, wish you to be anything but what you are. No, indeed, my dearest." He spoke with warmth, then quickly smiling again. "But I should like to dive deep down into your mind and search out all your most secret thoughts and feelings. I wish I had the power. Should you mind, Hope, if I had." He fixed a smiling but yet a keen and anxious gaze upon her face.

"No, Robert, I don't think I should," she replied, meeting his gaze with a look of confiding innocence.

A shade of disappointment crossed his brow, but it was driven away, and with something of thought and seriousness he said, "That is a strange and happy thing to say. I wish I could say it. I wish I could offer you to let your eyes dive into my mind, but I can't, I am afraid. And yet," he added, "I would rather have yours than any others. I should grieve for what you might find there, but I should not fear."

CHAPTER IX.

The gifts of genius were not thine,
Proudly before the world to shine;
And none Remember Thee
Save me.

MRS. NORTON.

ABOUT a fortnight after Mr. Gresham's arrival in the country, a formal invitation was sent to Audley Court, requesting that the whole, or any part of the Vavasour family would pay a week's visit at Underwood.

This fortnight, although there has been nothing of event to record, had been a

fortnight full of life and full of excitement. To Angela and Everard, it had been like waking up in a new existence.

Her enjoyment had many sources. The free country life, the novelty of all she saw, the amusement she derived from the society of companions suited to her taste—all these things conspired to excite and delight; all conspired to make her days pass as in a dream of enchantment; and when, added to this, the dawning light of romance threw its golden hue over her days, no wonder that she felt like a bird loosened from a chain and cage, and set free in Paradise.

To Everard, the novelty in some respects was not so great, but there *was* a dangerous novelty in Angela's society against which he was not proof. She *liked* him. The mere fact that he was liked by one so winning and so lovely, was a novelty which bewildered and excited him. She liked him, and showed that she did so; in no strange

ways; in ways common enough for most men to see, but new to him. She sympathised in his tastes, agreed with his opinions, cared to hear his feelings and thoughts expressed; would not suffer him to be unnoticed, talked to him with the same apparent pleasure, that she did to Robert—not so much perhaps, nor so freely, but with a something in her manner, that she had not to him; a kind of deference to which he was little accustomed. He had not yet begun to think about it, but he knew how quick the days passed, how bright was the autumn, how he dreaded the thoughts of his return to London, and escaped from it, as from a bad dream; how he could hardly sleep at night, for longing that the morning would come. These were dangerous symptoms in one of Everard's controlled and restrained nature; and vaguely he knew it; though too vaguely to acknowledge it in words.

Hope brought Mr. Gresham's invitation to her cousins, as they sat one morning

reading the newspapers in the library. "My uncle desired me to bring it," she said. "He cannot go, of course, but he begs you will do as you please. I think he wishes you to go."

Robert took the note. It was couched in pompous language, but was almost servile in its anticipations of pleasure, should the honour of acceptance be conferred. "Formal old prig," he said laughing, "I would not disappoint him for the world. I am sure my anticipations of pleasure are quite equal to his. Yes, I will go. What do you say, Everard?"

"Not for a week. I will go for a day or two."

"No, a week would be too much, even of his sweet society. Well, Hope, tell my father we accept for a day or two; and you, do you mean to go with us?"

"I? oh! no, Robert."

"And why, oh! no, in that decisive tone?

Would there be anything strange if you went?"

"I think there would," she said, with a slight smile.

"But why? Are you never to come out of the shade? Are you to be for ever a flower wasting your sweetness on the desert air?"

"I don't wish to go," she replied quickly. "I am not made for such things. I would go if my uncle wished it, but he says I may do as I please."

"So you shall, and it is best as it is. I am glad you are satisfied to stay at home, for that is where I like you to be. I don't covet to see you in the thick of festivities, though, perhaps, I am a selfish brute to say so. Well, Hope, give our messages to my father; tell him I accept with pleasure, and Everard with rapture." He gave a mischievous wink at his brother, but Everard either did not, or did not choose to see.

Hope left the room.

"Philosophers tell us as a remarkable fact," Robert observed, after a moment, "that no two people are exactly alike. Now that fact does not seem to me remarkable in the least; but a thing that does surprise me is, how two people of the same species, same rank, same education, same age, can be so absolutely and entirely different as Hope and Miss Gresham. As far as I can see, they have no property in common, except that both are human."

"Do you dislike Miss Gresham?" Everard asked.

"Dislike! I never said anything about liking. I like her. She is not my favourite style of woman, but she is a kind I tolerate very well. But what makes you so hot and peppery to-day? Why take up her cudgels so fast?"

"I am quite cool," Everard said, smiling, "though if you choose to make me hot, I know it is no use for me to say so."

"If you had not been so warm, I was going to ask you which of the two species of woman I mentioned, you would choose, if you must choose, for your wife?"

"As both are out of my reach, why should I think?" Everard said, colouring unconsciously.

"Why are both out of your reach?"

"You had better not ask that, Robert," he said, good-humouredly, "if you do I shall tell you. Miss Gresham is an heiress, and heiresses are not for me, nor I for heiresses; the other you may guess."

"Well, but now supposing Miss Gresham was not an heiress," persisted Robert, "and that you . . . ."

"We may suppose anything, and I don't care for suppositions," Everard said, with some impatience, and then added, laughing, "It is very bad manners, Robert, to ask questions. Dr. Johnson says so."

"In some people, perhaps, not in others. I consider it my bounden duty to make these

and other inquiries, and when it is my duty of course I do not shrink. Duty first, manners second. However, for the present my duty is done, so you may go back to your law reports if you please."

Angela drove to Audley Court to endeavour to alter Hope's resolution, but was unsuccessful; neither did she find the co-operation she had expected on the part of any of its inhabitants.

As she returned to the carriage after her vain efforts, Robert appeared in the court-yard.

He came to the carriage-door, and she told him her errand and its ill success.

"I am glad," he said.

"Are you?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Why?"

"It is very well for *us* to care for the pomps and vanities of the world," he replied, gravely enough, "because it is our nature—but it is a pleasure to see a head into which

they have never entered, and I should be sorry to have it troubled with them."

"You are not very complimentary, Mr. Vavasour," Angela said, laughing.

"Well, I will be complimentary now then," he replied: "I should not have said what I did, if I had not a very good opinion of you."

"That is really a *good* compliment," she said, smiling, "and now I go away quite satisfied. Good-bye!"

"That is a good girl," Robert said to himself, as he returned to the house; "considering the weight of gold she bears, a very good girl. A man might have many less dainty dishes set before him. It is rather a singular thing, and shows the moderation of my nature, that I feel no desire to avail myself of what I might have if I pleased. Units, tens, hundreds, thousands, laid at my feet, and as calm as an old philosopher, I avert my eyes and allow them to be picked up

by whosoever pleases. For once, my respected forefathers, I think I am a credit to you. Hope, where are you?"

She came flying towards him at the sound of his voice.

"I want a button, Hope, and a needle, and a thread, and then I want your assistance to put the button on my sleeve. For the loss of a button I am come home in a very depressed state of mind. Such is man!"

He watched her with a fond, sweet expression of countenance, as her quick fingers accomplished the task he set her. To judge by his countenance, it seemed as if he had feelings within that would not be restrained; but when she had done he only said, quietly and gaily, "Thanks, my fair angel, I like to have you waiting upon me. Get your bonnet, and let us have a walk."

The two brothers arrived late at Underwood, and Mr. Gresham, who was as

elaborate in his toilette as in his speeches, was obliged to relinquish his purpose of receiving them on their first arrival, in the hall.

He stood, however, at the door of the drawing-room to await their entrance there, and give his welcome in due form. A large party were assembled. One gentleman, Mr. Merivale (the old friend of Angela's childhood), from London; the rest gathered from different parts of the country. Almost all were unknown to the brothers, for Mr. Vavasour's secluded life, and the long absences of his sons, had in a great degree prevented them from mixing in the society of a very populous district. Mr. Gresham wished to be a good neighbour; he liked society, for society brought upon him the eyes of the world, but it was on the score of duty that he framed his plan of life. "The riches that Providence bestows," he observed, on this evening, to Mr. Merivale, "are not to be hid under a bushel. If I

have been blessed with a more than common share of good things, it is but just and right that I should display them. I feel that many eyes are upon me, and I must make it my endeavour to act according to the station in which I have been placed." A slight elevation of the head betrayed how lofty that station was in his own estimation.

"Very good," was Mr. Merivale's calm answer to the oration which has here been considerably abridged in its proportions.

As soon as Robert appeared, Mr. Gresham welcomed him with flattering attention, and then with Everard in his suite conducted him in a kind of royal progress round the room. "Mr. Vavasour and his brother," this was his mode of introduction. Nor did his attention end here. Desiring him to take Angela to dinner, and to place her at his left side, he continued his favours without intermission. Thoughts, lips, and eyes were all alike devoted to Robert. He could scarcely attend with common politeness to a

dull lady on his right side, and in his desire that Robert should eat of the best, could scarcely spare time to satisfy the cravings of his own nature. To make a lion is not a work of difficulty. Had Robert been possessed of few personal claims to distinction, the notice of his host would have won for him the notice of the guests; but in truth Robert's pretensions were so incontrovertible that no attention appeared to surpass his claims, and very willingly Mr. Gresham's guests did homage to the idol he set up.

Robert was no coxcomb and no fool. He laughed in his heart, but to only a few people notice is distasteful, and it certainly was not distasteful to him. He was excited by it, exerted himself to please, and won by his own powers, the regard which at first had been won for him.

Everard's fate was naturally very different. He sat at the other end of the table, between two dull gentlemen, silent and unnoticed. Except as Robert's brother, Mr. Gresham

had bestowed no attention upon him; and Mr. Gresham's guests for the most part followed his lead. Even the dull men that sat by his side stretched forward to catch Robert's gay words, and wished themselves nearer to the sphere in which he moved.

In the evening the distinction between the two brothers was made yet more apparent. With something of the same royal honour as before described, Mr. Gresham conducted Robert from the dining to the drawing-room, and then to Angela's side. Angela was good-naturedly endeavouring to entertain the good but dull lady who was her companion, but not being supremely gifted with patience, felt and looked, exhausted with her efforts.

"Will you help?" she whispered to Robert as he stood beside her. He laughed, but with ready good humour agreed, and drawing a chair close to Angela and her guest, sat himself down to the task of entertainment. To be entertaining was rarely an effort to him: his observation was so quick, his sense of humour so keen, his forms of expression

so original; but this evening, excited and pleased by the pleasure he so evidently gave, he surpassed himself. The other guests were drawn to the centre of attraction.

Some joined in the conversation; some assisted it by their unfailing laugh. Some stood with open eyes and ears. Grateful to Robert, excited and amused, Angela listened, talked, and laughed, with all her powers.

On the outskirts of the crowd Everard stood in a reverie. Almost all were strange to him; none thought of, none heeded him. He was unaccustomed to notice, and certainly had not expected it; but suddenly his mind became aware, as it never had been before, of the extraordinary difference between Robert and himself; the difference in charm, in position, in hopes and promises of fortune. Till now, except perhaps as regarded his mother, he had never felt jealous; he had always acknowledged Robert's superiority as a thing of course, a fact so plain and established that it was not worth a thought, but

this night the conviction of that superiority brought a pang so sharp, a stir of envy so bitter and tumultuous, that he himself was startled by it.

"What is the matter with me?" he asked himself, with a feeling of hate and abhorrence. His eyes looked inwards, keenly and resolutely, and the answer was given.

It was the answer to this question that had plunged Everard into his reverie. No sooner was he aware of the state of his feelings, than he began to fight and argue with them, to say to himself that vain word in such cases—"Folly." The fight, the struggle was depicted on his countenance; it was always grave when in repose, but this night it was stern.

Mr. Merivale was the only person who had not gathered about Robert's charmed circle. He was an old friend, a privileged guest; one who did as he pleased, without fear of questionings. He liked to read the newspapers of an evening—and come what might he did read them.

While he read, he watched. An acute observer, a student of human nature, and one especially interested in the fate of Angela, he watched the two brothers with interest and attention. The countenance of Everard attracted him. He had once or twice across the table, addressed him during dinner; and his unpretendingness of manner and intelligent answers had pleased him. The feelings now depicted on his face interested him still more. Suddenly laying down the newspaper, he rose and approached him.

"After all, Mr. Vavasour," he said, rather abruptly entering on the conversation, "it is manners make the man."

"I believe it is, indeed," Everard said, smiling, "but what has brought you to this sudden decision?"

"I will tell you why I say it just now;—I was prepared this evening to hate your brother. I always am, when I hear a name more often than I think a name should be pronounced. That was before I saw him.

When you came in to-night, I was prepared to hate him more. I always am, when attention, which I consider superabundant, is paid to a person. But after all this preparation, he has disarmed me. There is a charm about him which I cannot resist."

"All who know Robert feel the same," Everard said, with warmth.

"That is a brotherly speech; but from my own sensations, I have no doubt it is true. Now the fact is, I have a good right to hate him; and when I tell you the circumstances, I think you will allow it. I have not been in England for five years. I arrive, and being an old friend of Mr. Gresham and his daughter, I pursue them down here. I come, expecting to be made much of. I arrive, and the very first day my nose is put out of joint by a young new friend; I am thought no more of than an old shoe. You will own this is enough to fill me with hatred and all uncharitableness."

"Most certainly," Everard said, laughing.

"So conscious was I that such ought to be

the proper state of my feelings, that it was with surprise I found myself totally untouched by bad passions. 'How is this?' I asked myself; and the answer I received was the observation with which I addressed you. Manners make the man. There is no feeling indignation where honours are borne as your brother bears them. He deserves them well."

"I believe I was making much the same reflection," Everard replied; "and to say the truth, I am afraid I was indulging in some envy of the qualities you speak of."

"That is a thing of course," said his companion. "So was I. We would not deprive him of what sits so well upon him, but if we could, we would all, have those, or any qualities, which command attention, still more admiration, still more love."

"I suppose so," Everard said, gravely.

"These are new acquaintances of yours, Mr. Vavasour, I believe?"

He acquiesced.

"I have not seen Miss Gresham for five

years. My chief purpose in coming to England was to see her again. I left her a child. I wished to see what she was as a woman."

"You must be satisfied I think," Everard said, smiling.

"Why, yes, upon the whole. She is not so pretty as I thought she promised to be; but in other ways she is improved.

"You must have expected a good deal if you are disappointed," Everard said, with more warmth than he was conscious of.

"She was a beautiful child. I suppose the child haunts my dreams and makes me less satisfied with the woman. The eyes and complexion are perfect, but I could have wished the nose and mouth were more classical."

"That is being very critical," Everard said, amused.

"Yes; but like Iago, I am nothing if not critical. I am, however, satisfied on the whole, and the mental improvement is more than I looked for."

Everard was not aware that the critical eyes had been watching him during this conversation. Mr. Merivale was a dangerous person. When bent on observation, it was hard to elude him.

At this moment the party broke up. The lady who came from a distance was taking her departure, and Mr. Gresham, too much absorbed in Robert, to have hitherto attended to his own pleasures, was making up a whist table. Mr. Merivale was in request for this purpose.

Everard stood where he left him, and took up for a moment the newspaper that Mr. Merivale had laid down. He was glancing over it, when he was startled by Angela's voice. She had left her place, and had taken a seat on the sofa, near the table at which he stood.

"I am afraid I interrupt you, Mr. Vavasour," she said, in a voice peculiarly sweet and winning. "Is there anything very interesting in that newspaper?"

"Not much," he said, smiling, and laying it down.

"I am come to ask you," she continued, "a strange thing, but you must remember that I am in two characters in this house. I am a young lady, and, therefore, bound to be very discreet; but I am also the lady of the house, and bound to see that all my guests are amused and happy. I want to know if there is anything the matter with you to-night, and why you are so grave." Her manner was peculiar. It was more than kind, and yet at the same time had a grace and dignity which became the character she wished to assume.

"Am I grave?" he said, unconscious that his outward man had so betrayed his inward thoughts.

"Yes, grave all the evening, but lately more than grave."

"I believe I always am grim-looking," he said, smiling, "but I am not really so grim as I look."

"I see you do not like my questions," she said, "and I dare say I am impertinent; but what I wished to say was this, I feared you might think that you were neglected while others were made much of; and I wished to tell you it was not so, though it might seem so. You must remember," she added, quickly, as if in explanation of her rising colour, "that it is my duty as mistress of this house to see that all are happy, that is as far as may be; and so you must excuse my impertinence."

Lord Byron says—

> "It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
> On those that smile on us. The heart must
> Leap kindly back to kindness."

If not always true, it certainly is so in a case like Everard's, where such kindness was rarely expressed towards him, and where already he was far from coldly gazing. He was deeply touched. But he was now on his guard, awakened to his danger, and determined to resist it. His answer was little expressive of what he really felt.

"You have imposed very severe duties on your position," he said, smiling, "and I think a short practise will tell you, you must give them up. For myself, thank you a thousand times. I assure you, I was not so vain as to suppose myself neglected."

He fancied, but he thought it must be fancy, that she looked hurt at his answer. She was silent for a moment; then suddenly said, laughing, and in another tone, "That is a new phase of vanity, is it not, to suppose itself neglected? I thought vanity supposed itself to be observed."

"I think vanity is to suppose itself of importance at all," he replied, "and quite as often complains of neglect, as it takes to itself praise."

"Well, perhaps. And now good night. Do you think, as mistress of the house, I need sit up till that whist party breaks up. I am rather tired of laughing, and I should be glad to go. What do you say, Mr. Va-

vasour?" turning to Robert, who passed at the moment.

"Put the question," he said, "and I will give an answer in a moment, be the point what it may; but I am like Nebuchadnezzar's poor ill-used sages. I cannot give an answer, without knowing what the question is."

Angela laughed and explained.

"Go to bed by all means," he replied, "though it is extremely uncivil of me to say so. I hate rules and laws; and especially on this point. Let all men go to bed when they are inclined, and we shall have an end of that worst of evils, a face convulsed with yawns. Good night. Pray go to bed."

"It is a pity she is an heiress, is it not, Everard?" he said archly, as she left them; but without waiting for observation or answer, went on to the whist table. Everard again took up the newspaper, but not to read. His mind was severely struggling

with new and strange feelings. Folly, idle dreams, he again called them, and was determined to crush them at once, and for ever. The arguments with which he animated his rebellious will, were drawn from the source, which animated all his endeavours to do his duty. What would his father say, if he yielded to his first temptation? A temptation to dream his life away, to set before himself an illusive hope, to escape from the more toilsome life laid out for him. He imagined his father's face of pain, if he should hear that he, Everard, was courting the favour of the heiress, and the imagination was for the moment at least all powerful. With a sigh, he blew away the vain fancies that were bewildering him, and returned to himself.

CHAPTER X.

From time to time
Henceforth I felt, although I met them not,
The visitation of those serious eyes.
Eve of the Conquest.

Everard came down early the following morning, earlier, that is, than the breakfast hour of the house. Finding the breakfast room empty, and being told by the servants that he was half an hour too soon, he went out for a walk. When he returned, he was observed by Angela from the breakfast room window, and she opened the window to invite him to come in. She and Mr. Merivale were there alone. Mr. Merivale was reading his letters.

"You have been out to shame us, I suppose," she said laughing, "but it is only just ten o'clock."

"I went out because I came down too soon," he said, smiling; "like the man in the moon. I had no other reason."

"But you do think our hours very late?"

"Indeed I do not. Mine are earlier, but that does not make yours late."

"I won't ask you at what o'clock you *get up*, for I feel sure that it is at some unearthly hour; but at what o'clock do you come down at Audley Court?"

"At half-past eight."

"And do you all breakfast then? Does poor Mr. Vavasour? I don't think he can like it much; your brother I mean."

"No; we don't breakfast till nine. Robert is very good. He does not much like it, but he is not often late."

"Then what takes place at half-past eight?"

"My father reads prayers."

"Oh!" Angela said, gravely; then, smiling, "Why did you not say that before?"

"I had no need, had I?"

"Now, Mr. Vavasour, for once you don't speak quite the truth. You did not choose to say it, because you thought it would be a reproach to a house where there were no prayers."

"I will not be positive. It may have been so; but I really do not think it was."

"Is it common to have family prayers? I beg your pardon," she said, suddenly, "for asking so many questions. I believe I never speak without a question; but my ignorance of the ways of the world is such that I am forced to do it. I hope to improve. Is it common?"

"I fancy it is," Everard said, after a moment's thought. "I should suppose it is; but I know very little of the interior arrangements of houses in general."

"Do you think it a right custom?"

"It seems, I think, a good and natural one."

"I will release you now," she said, laughing. "I know I must be a bore; but my ignorance is my excuse."

"I shall be most happy to answer any questions," Everard said, smiling also; "but if they are about the ways of the world, perhaps I am not much wiser than you are."

"Did you hear me, Mr. Merivale?" Angela said, approaching him. "Did you think me a bore?"

"Rather, my dear child," he said, looking up from his letter; "I could not understand a word I read."

Nevertheless, with a glance, half amused, half anxious, he had been watching her from behind his letter.

The rest of the party (with the exception of Robert), consisting of Mr. Gresham and two or three gentlemen, now entered the room, and all proceeded to breakfast.

Nothing could be more pompously urbane

than Mr. Gresham was to all; but his eyes were on the door, and he was evidently ill at ease in daring to eat before Robert appeared. Once or twice he apologised to himself for doing so; and the only special notice he took of Everard was to make the same apology to him. He had some good shooting, which was the avowed purpose for which the party had been formed; but nothing was allowed to be settled on the subject, or even debated, until Robert came. "It was all in Mr. Vavasour's hands." This reduced every inquirer to silence.

When Robert did appear, at the very end of breakfast, the superabundant attentions of the preceding evening were resumed. He went forward to meet him, overpowered his apologies for his lateness, by his (Mr. Gresham's) apologies for his rudeness, and made amends for the latter by supplying Robert's wants, with a hospitality and ostentation five times as great as that he had shown to his other guests.

Robert accepted it all with careless ease and good humour; neither rejecting the attentions of his host nor glorying in them. It was impossible to be angry with *him*, and yet though he escaped, there was a rising wrath and rebellion in Angela's mind, which boded future strife in the house.

As she left the breakfast room she overheard a young man say to Everard, "I am sure I wish I was an elder son, don't you?"

She slackened her steps to catch Everard's reply. It was given with more truth than politeness, so far, at least, as the young gentleman was concerned. "Unless we wish for other qualities at the same time, perhaps the matter of birth would be no great advantage to us."

Angela smiled to herself as she walked on, but the observation of the young man, though she owned it was ill bred, added to the irritation of her mind.

In the course of the morning Mr. Merivale entered the drawing-room. He found

Angela seated at a table, with a large Prayer-book before her. His quick observation immediately guessed the nature of her occupation, but without discovering this, he approached her and asked, "What are you about now, Angela?"

"I wish to have family prayers in the house," she replied with dignity, "and I am making out a proper selection. I wish to have them to-morrow morning, or I would wait till I could see Mr. Addison, and ask him to choose for me."

"And who is to read, my love?"

"I mean to read myself; that is, if papa refuses, which I know he will."

"*You!*"

"Yes. You seem surprised. Is there anything extraordinary in my doing it?"

"A little, I think. Don't do it, my dear child, if you will take my advice. It is an office not very consistent with your age, and giddiness, and other things."

"I don't see that," she said. "I know I

am not very good, but if we wait till we are perfect before we do anything that is right, I don't see that we ever can improve. I think it right to have prayers in a house, and if I can I will have them. I dare say I shall be frightened at first, but I don't care for that."

"Now, my dear child, listen to me," said Mr. Merivale, with difficulty restraining a smile. "I am the very last person to say a word against your zeal; but do not be in such haste. Let all things be done decently and in order. Do not while all your servants are busy and hurried begin such a thing. Let them know you are thinking about it; give them time to consider it, and consider it yourself, and then take some quiet time to begin. Trust me, I am giving you good advice."

"I don't think you are," she said eagerly; "one should act rightly while one feels the spirit to do it. I never do a thing if I let the right time go by."

"It requires principle, certainly; but, believe me, hasty things are dangerous things. Besides, there is another reason: if you do this thing suddenly, what will Mr. Everard Vavasour think? It strikes me he will think you pay a very undue regard to his opinion."

"I don't care," she said, though her blood mounting to her temples, somewhat contradicted her words, "I am glad he should see on the contrary that some regard *is* paid to his opinion in this house. I like what he said, and I am not ashamed to shew it."

"Poor little thing," he said, suddenly patting her shoulders, "you had better take care of yourself."

She did not notice his observation, but resumed her inspection of the Prayer-book.

A moment afterwards Mr. Gresham entered the room, and as if to shew herself entirely unmoved by Mr. Merivale's arguments, she immediately made her request to her father.

He placed himself before the fire, and after a moment's reflection observed, "This requires consideration. If it is a proper thing it shall be done, though at some inconvenience. Is it a common appendage of a country house?"

"I don't know," Angela said, "but I know that in some houses it is done. Mr. Vavasour reads prayers at Audley Court."

"Indeed!" Mr. Gresham asked eagerly. "Has Mr. Vavasour been speaking on the subject? His opinion is of importance."

"Mr. *Everard* Vavasour told me so," Angela said with emphasis.

"Oh!" was Mr. Gresham's reply. "Mr. Everard Vavasour's opinion is another thing; deserving of consideration certainly, but, comparatively speaking, of less moment."

"I don't see that," Angela said warmly and with a deep blush.

"Nor I," said Mr. Merivale.

"Mr. Gresham looked from one to the other with too much surprise in his coun-

tenance to leave room for an expression of displeasure. He was one of those who with difficulty are brought to see that which they do not wish to see; and though there was something in Angela's look which might have made him uneasy for his cherished plans, he did not appear to be conscious of it.

Without resuming the subject, he in a moment observed to Mr. Merivale, "That Mr. Vavasour is a very pleasing young man; a very fine young man."

"Yes," said Mr. Merivale, "they both are."

"I spoke of the eldest. He is, I should say, the first young man of his day. Accomplished, amiable in manner, striking in appearance, and, if I mistake not, formed to have the eyes of the world upon him."

"I like both," persisted Mr Merivale, "but I am not certain that I do not like the youngest best."

"It would be rather singular," Mr Gresham said, contemptuously elevating his nose, "to prefer the younger to the elder."

Angela's heart was bursting to speak, but she refrained. Her cheek, however, was again crimson.

Mr. Gresham looked at her with a stare of observation, through a countenance totally unmoved. After a short silence he left his place, and, approaching the table, asked what she was doing.

She told him.

"You need not trouble yourself," he said coldly. "I will attend to the subject myself. If I find that family prayers are a common appendage of country houses, I will undertake the duty in proper time. Meanwhile, I beg that my affairs may not be canvassed with those who can have no concern with them. Merivale, do you choose to walk with me?"

"With all my heart," he said, and followed him from the room, leaving Angela with a mind in which rebellion was beginning to be harboured. The feelings that animated her were partly generous, partly ro-

mantic, and partly wilful; but the generous motives were so predominant, they were in their nature so right and true, that she scarcely acknowledged the second, and entirely disregarded the third. Her taste and heart alike revolted from this courting of Robert, and she proudly determined that she would show a spirit animated by other feelings.

In this temper of mind she awaited the evening.

Another party had been invited, and the second evening was in many respects a repetition of the first. During dinner Angela sat again between her father and Robert, and as Mr. Gresham listened to and joined in their animated conversation, he banished every dawning uneasiness regarding the success of his scheme. Angela and Robert did indeed get on exceedingly well together. Both, of course, perceived, one with internal chafing, the other with internal merriment, Mr. Gresham's designs, but both were very

willing to be pleased and amused, whensoever and howsoever they could. When therefore Robert, in the beginning of the evening, was again pompously conducted to Angela's side, she received him without any show of annoyance, and he accepted his position without reluctance.

Waiting until they were engaged in a full flow of discourse, Mr. Gresham, having performed his duty as a father, proceeded to amuse himself. Whist was the supreme and solemn diversion of his life. Even at whist he still was Mr. Gresham; even his play was in the eyes of the world, but certainly he was less guarded, less conscious of his enormous responsibilities when engaged in that employment, than on any other occasions of his life. This evening the whist table was formed early, and he sat down to play in serene majesty, at peace with himself, his daughter, and all the world.

"Are you really going back to Audley

Court to-morrow?" Angela said to Robert shortly after they had been left to themselves.

"Yes, we must go. We shall only be a week or ten days more at home, and we don't like to leave my father for a longer time. That is Everard does not, and I think he is right."

"And you go after breakfast to-morrow—that is you go out shooting, and don't come back any more?"

"I believe that is the plan."

"Then I must go and speak to your brother now. I have got something to ask him."

"Have you," Robert said, laughing, "what is it? May I be a partaker of the secret?"

"It is not a secret, it is something about my aunt, to whom your brother was very good-natured in London. I will tell you another time what it is, if you care to know, but I must seize my opportunity, or perhaps I shall not have one again. Will you let me go by."

He moved his chair, and watched her for a minute as she crossed over to Everard, amused alike by her ways and by Everard's face when he was summoned. He was much too quick not to see that they were what he called "a little taken," and the idea afforded him infinite entertainment.

"Mr. Vavasour!" Angela said, slightly raising her voice to attract Everard's attention, as she seated herself on a sofa near him.

He was talking to, or rather listening to a prosy gentleman; but thus called upon, he could not but leave him in the midst of his prose.

He came to her. "I wish you would sit down for a minute," she said, assuming in her manner something of the same ease and dignity she had assumed on the previous evening. "I have got something I wish to say?"

He looked startled, as Robert had observed. These conversations tried his self

command too severely to be agreeable to him. He could do nothing, however, but obey.

"What I want to say is this," she began. "I have an impression on my mind that you must think I do not tell quite the truth, and I do not like you to think it."

"I think I know what you mean," Everard said, smiling.

"When we spoke of plots and disguises the other day, I know by my looks I acknowledged I had done something of the kind, and yet I denied it. I know you must think I did not speak the truth, but I had not courage to explain myself. The fact is, I do not call it a disguise. I will tell you how it was. My aunt told me of a Mr. Vavasour's kindness to her. I knew that a Mr. Vavasour lived near the place which my father had lately bought. I dare say it was a foolish fancy, but I thought I should like to see him before we came here, and yet not exactly in my own person. I dressed myself,

therefore, as my aunt's niece ought to dress. There is the history."

"I am very much obliged to you for explaining it," Everard said. "It is quite plain and very natural."

"And what do you say now?" she asked, playfully. "Do you condemn all plots and disguises, even such a very little thing as that?"

"If you ask me," he replied, "I must say what I think. I do not like them."

"You think I was very wrong then?"

"Very wrong, oh no, that is a strong expression. But why, Miss Gresham, ask my opinion? It cannot matter. I have an objection to such things. I think them mischievous, dangerous things, but I do not wish to be forced to say so."

"There could be no great mischief or danger there."

"There might," he said, quickly.

"I cannot see it; and though I too like

truth, I think you are severe. What harm have I done or could I do?"

"I cannot very well explain myself," he said, hastily. "I ought, I believe, to beg your pardon for giving my opinion so freely, but when a person is asked . . . "

"When a person asks questions as I do," Angela said, playfully, "she will be answered. And now I have got a favour to ask. Will you grant it?"

"I will when I know what I have to grant."

"I knew you would say that," she replied, laughing. "All I want to ask is, whether you will be so kind when you go back to London as to visit my aunt again?"

"I will, certainly," he replied.

"Do not suppose that I am not well aware that I am asking a favour. My poor aunt is very tedious except to those who love her as I do. I know this very well; but your visits were so great a pleasure to her,

and her life is so dreary, that I cannot help asking you to do this kindness—a kindness to me as well as to her."

"I assure you I did not find my visits tedious," he said, with warmth. "I am obliged to study very hard and live with many very dry people. I found it rather a pleasure than otherwise to be able to be kind to her, and to be received with kindness. Perhaps you will not understand what I mean, but it was something so new and different, that it refreshed me."

"Then why did you so very quickly give up the pleasure?"

He coloured slightly. "Not because I found it tedious, but because I thought it was time."

"She thought you were tired of her," persisted Angela, "and her feelings, poor thing, were hurt. She never expects attentions, but she feels the want of them all the same."

"I am very sorry," he said, with great

earnestness. "My reason was very different; I had supposed her to be alone; when I found it was otherwise I thought it was wiser and better to bring my visits to an end."

His voice had a hurried tone, and when he had done there was a moment's pause; then Angela bent forward, and with something of a queenly air, calm and steady, though with great meaning, asked, "And for what reason *wiser?*"

He looked suddenly up at her and coloured deeply, and in the moment of temptation, forgetting his late resolutions, allowed his eyes to flash with a fire that shortly told a long tale. Angela met his gaze, drew back, and coloured still more deeply than he did. She had provoked that look, but now was abashed at having provoked it. He drew back also.

Neither spoke, and a very awkward silence followed. It was still more awkwardly broken.

Mr. Gresham rose from his whist table, came to the spot where Angela sat, and coldly said, "You will oblige me by going to the pianoforte. We all enjoy music, and I do not know why a young lady is taught to play with much pains and expense, if she cannot entertain her friends."

His interference restored Angela's self possession, and as coldly she replied, "I shall be very happy to play; I will go this instant."

Mr. Gresham returned with a stately air to his seat. Angela rose from hers, and paused for a moment at the table. She then said, with something of the constraint of shyness in her manner, "Then I may depend on your promise, Mr Vavasour, and tell my aunt that you will be kind enough to visit her again."

"I will certainly," he replied, rising from his chair, but not looking at her. His whole air and manner were changed.

Angela went slowly and uneasily to the

pianoforte. He did not follow even with his eyes, but joined himself to a group of gentlemen, who were talking over country news and business, and stood there silent and pre-occupied. He was miserable—as miserable as a conscientious man who has broken a resolution conscientiously made, as a man who hopes he is strong and finds himself weak,—can be. What Angela felt or meant he could not guess, but for himself he was convinced that he had taken undue advantage of her kindliness. What Mr. Gresham meant he understood well.

After Angela had left the drawing-room, and the whist party was broken up, Mr. Gresham came to make his request to Robert that he would prolong his visit for another day. He had a party whom he wished him to meet; he had depended on his remaining; he was, in short, very pressing.

Robert, easy, good-natured, and well amused, was inclined to give way. "I will stay," he replied, "if Everard will; but if

he thinks we had better go then I am afraid I must refuse."

Everard was standing at a little distance. Mr. Gresham turned to him. "Yes, I think we had better go," he said, quickly.

With great civility, with more attention than he had yet shown him, Mr. Gresham begged him to relent, and pressed his request with overmuch pressing.

A man is ashamed to refuse a trifling favour when it is asked with earnestness, and Everard gave way. Hardly had he done so, however, before he longed to recall his consent, feeling that the trifle was no trifle to him.

Mr. Gresham was profuse in his thanks, and so gracious in his manner, that Everard went to bed perplexed and bewildered. Strange hopes, vague dreams flitted about his pillow, and tormented him with their pertinacity. Resist them as he might they came again.

CHAPTER XI.

He spake of virtue ; not the gods
More purely when they wish to charm
Pallas and Juno sitting by :
And with a sweeping of the arm,
And a lack lustre dead blue eye
Devolved his rounded periods.

TENNYSON.

EVERARD awoke the following morning with a resolute determination to keep out of temptation, by avoiding Angela's society. For this purpose he remained in his room till after ten o'clock, and then, hearing Mr. Gresham's step, followed him down stairs to breakfast.

At the foot of the stairs Mr. Gresham turned and looked up, and seeing Everard, waited until he joined him.

"It is my wish, Mr. Vavasour," he then said, speaking more suddenly and quickly than was his custom, "to say a few words to you in my private room. I am fortunate in meeting you here. May I request you to be so good as to give me the favour of your attention for a short time immediately after breakfast. The shooting party will not leave Underwood until half-past eleven."

Everard coloured but assented. He was surprised and troubled; conscience pointed in one direction, and made him dread the interview.

"When I leave the room, Mr. Vavasour, perhaps you will be good enough to follow me. I wish our conversation to be *private*," with a marked emphasis on the word, "nor do I wish it to incur observation."

"I will take care," Everard replied, quietly,

and they went on together into the breakfast room.

Angela blushed, as she shook hands with him; that which she had done on the spur of the moment; that which her principles (*i.e.*, that the conventional etiquette of the world was nonsense,) had prompted her to do, had, on reflection, agitated her. She feared Everard would think she had been forward. She longed to see him again, that she might read the impression she had made. His non-appearance had annoyed her; and his countenance, which, in spite of all his efforts was grave and pre-occupied when he did come, troubled her more.

Shaking off her embarrassment, however, and forcing herself to speak, she said, laughing, "You are learning bad habits in this house, Mr. Vavasour. I don't think it was any unearthly hour this morning."

"I think I am," he replied with a grave smile, and as Mr. Gresham observed at the

moment that breakfast was ready, he turned away and chose his place far from Angela's seat.

Feelings quickly change. Angela had feared *his* disapprobation. She now imagined that he was in fear of her, and she was at peace again.

When Angela had left the breakfast room Mr. Gresham made a silent signal to Everard, and left it by another door. In a minute, when, obedient to his instructions, it could be done without observation, Everard followed.

"Be so good as to be seated, Mr. Vavasour," was Mr. Gresham's request; and Everard having taken a seat near the fire, Mr. Gresham placed himself with his back towards it and prepared for his discourse.

"My object, Mr. Vavasour, in requesting you to give me your attention, is in order to inform you of some circumstances regarding my daughter's prospects and position in life. They are circumstances of importance, as

indeed, all circumstances affecting a young lady in her position must be.

He paused a moment, and Everard replied, "I am, of course, Mr. Gresham, ready to listen to anything you may wish to communicate, but excuse me if I say that I cannot conceive what right I have to be informed of the circumstances you mention.

"That will hereafter appear. Be so good, my dear Mr. Vavasour, as to grant me your attention. My daughter is, as you are aware, my only child; according to my present intention, she is also my sole heiress—I say my present intention—for my life is not so far advanced but that I remain liable to the common changes and chances of the world. Circumstances might occur, differences might arise, which would afford an inducement to change my intention. At present, however, it is my wish that she should be my sole heiress, and few, perhaps, may hope to be endowed with a more goodly dowry."

He paused again, looked around him,

glanced at the ornamented ceiling and gaudy carpet, and, finally, threw open his coat and closed it again.

"All this I supposed," Everard said, seeing an observation was expected, "but again I must say that I cannot see how it affects me."

He waved his hand to bespeak patience and began again. "Such being the circumstances, it is natural that I should with grave consideration, reflect on the future destination of my possessions If I had desired that my wealth should flow into full treasuries, if I had desired to mingle my name and blood with the blood of noble families, I confess it appears to me the desire would have been natural. If I had desired to place a coronet on my daughter's head, I confess, with her position and outward accomplishments, I think the desire would have been justified. And such, indeed, *was* my desire; but man, Mr. Vavasour, is a finite being; he cannot accomplish all his wishes. It becomes us to

submit to the ordinary dispensations of Providence, which rarely sees fit to give all things into one hand. In a word I felt it my duty to make a choice of good things, to select some and be content to part with others. I chose, therefore, for my daughter's future husband, one not noble,—though in every country but ours he would be noble—not wealthy, but of ancient lineage, of fair possessions, and endowed with all those gifts and accomplishments which are calculated to attract the eyes of the world."

"You mean my brother," Everard said, colouring slightly.

"We will speak further on that point. Be so good as to allow me to proceed. Such being my feelings and desires, you may conceive, Mr. Vavasour, that any disappointment in the plans I have cherished would be painful to me. I am aware that you would not willingly thwart my desires, I have too high a sense of your character, but I confess I yesterday observed with pain, that is, some

circumstances drew me to observe, that you regarded my daughter—did her the honour to regard her—with favour, and (be so obliging as to hear me, Mr. Vavasour) led me to fear that my daughter might, through your efforts, be drawn to regard you with favour ;—you, Mr. Vavasour, endowed with many virtues, but undistinguished in the world, of small fortune, and small prospect of advancement ; and this at the early age of seventeen, before the mind or judgment is formed, or capable of a decision. You may imagine my feelings."

He raised his nose and placed his hands behind his coat-tails in amazement and dismay.

With difficulty Everard heard him out. Pride, wounded feeling, and a strange throb of pleasure, mingled their sensations in his breast, but he mastered them and answered without excitement.

"I have listened to you patiently, Mr. Gresham, because you desired me to do so,

and because I acknowledge it is natural you should feel anxious respecting your daughter's happiness; but I must now tell you that you have mistaken me. I confess, indeed, that I have not seen Miss Gresham with indifference, it would be difficult to do it; if she were poor, if she were a beggar—but no matter for that. As it is, I have had no such view as you imagine. Not," he continued, his colour rising, and speaking with a proud dignity, "that I think money of such immense worth, that nothing but rank and worldly goods are worthy to win it—I should be ashamed of having so base a thought; but there is a natural feeling in men's minds that it needs *some* worth, some weight of character, or age, or tried industry, to win this world's good things, and I feel it myself as much as any. I knew that I was not one likely to win your favour, and whatever may be hereafter, I felt I was too young and undistinguished at present, to attempt to win it; and more than this, I do

not even wish to win it. I do not speak of the idle thoughts and hopes that cross the mind without one's will—but I speak of my reason and conscience; they tell me that I ought not to wish, and it is my desire to obey them; now I have said all I have to say, and I trust you are satisfied."

"Perfectly so, Mr. Vavasour, you have spoken extremely well. I perceive that the opinion I formed of your character, and which disposed me to place this confidence in you, was well grounded. Allow me to detain you a few moments longer. This being satisfactorily settled, I leave the future in the hands of Providence. I have done my part in choosing a proper direction in which my great possessions may flow; and I think, Mr. Vavasour, if you consider the subject, you will observe that I have also chosen well regarding the advantages to your family. What your father has toiled and spared to gain, I offer to him; and to your brother I offer that lavish wealth which his

disposition is peculiarly formed to require. My plans have been laid out with forethought and wisdom. I confess I cherish them, and I think I may say, have a right to cherish them."

Everard was silent. He did very forcibly see the worldly advantages; but he could not, without pain, think of Angela as Robert's wife; and though he had no right to speak of so vague a thing as Robert's attachment to Hope, he would not give any opinion regarding the possibilities or probabilities of such a marriage.

Mr. Gresham had expected a demonstration of admiration and gratitude, and was disappointed; but he was human, and after a moment's observation, he reflected that Everard might feel some pain in the scheme, even while its beauty was fully acknowledged. He was content, therefore, to let his silence pass unnoticed.

There was a pause, and Everard rose. "One moment, Mr. Vavasour. I have two requests to make. One is that the plans I

have unfolded to you in this conversation may remain absolutely private. I have intrusted them to you alone."

"Of course I consider this conversation private," was Everard's reply. "You may depend on my discretion."

"My second, Mr. Vavasour, is regarding your conduct to my daughter. You will meet her again this evening. May I request that while there is nothing in your manner that seeks her favour, there may also be no withdrawing of common attentions, no constraint, no avoidance. I do not wish to have her interest, or curiosity, or attention, in any way excited. You will perceive at once my object in this request."

"It may be difficult," Everard said, gravely, "and I can make no promise, but I think you may trust me. I mean to do my best; not so much because you ask it, as because my own sense of what is right tells me that under the circumstances this will be the proper course of conduct. Forgive me if I

express myself too plainly. I desire of course to obey your wishes, but I could not promise to do so, unless my judgment approved them."

"Of course, of course, Mr. Vavasour. I ask no more, and now permit me to thank you for your kind manner in listening to me, and to express my interest now and henceforward in your welfare. I see the keepers approaching. I wish you a good day's sport."

Everard left the room; and, without trusting himself to think, joined his brother and the rest of the party, who were now assembling in the hall.

In the course of the day Mr. Gresham recounted to Mr. Merivale what had passed with Everard, taking the opportunity to lay before him at the same moment his plans for Angela.

Mr. Merivale was a person who thought matters generally righted themselves, and that there were few occasions in life where remonstrance and interference were useful. He saw all the worldliness of the plan, and

from his own observation of Robert, did not see any great appearance of its success. If it did succeed, he saw good qualities enough to give him hope for Angela's happiness; and to make the marriage a sufficiently desirable one. His opinion was, however, that Everard was not only preferred at the moment, but would continue to be so; and if this should be the case, he thought what Mr. Gresham had done the best thing that could happen. Both were too young for any present arrangements, and he thought a true and wise attachment likely to be of infinite service to Angela's character.

These were his motives for saying little against Mr. Gresham's plans, beyond a warning that he had better enquire more fully into Robert's character and habits. On one point, however, he spoke warmly, and this was to advise greater confidence towards Angela. He wished Mr. Gresham to mention to her that her manner to Everard had not pleased him, and, in short, to make known

his feelings regarding over intimacy with him. "If you omit this," he said, "Angela may observe constraint and avoidance in his manner, may misread it, and may be led to some overt acts unbecoming her position, and much to be deprecated."

"I should hope," Mr. Gresham replied, "that the essential modesty belonging to a young female will in itself prevent such an evil."

"That Angela is essentially modest," Mr. Merivale said with some earnestness, "I am certain; but her feelings are quick, her character self-willed; and from the manner in which she has been brought up she has an undue scorn for the small yet just proprieties of her age and circumstances. Believe me confidence will win her confidence; but underplots will fail in mastering her."

"I differ with you entirely. If I once speak to Angela on this subject, our two wills become definite things. If I let it pass, as Mr. Everard Vavasour has assured me it shall

pass, the slight preference I have observed with pain and displeasure will be dissipated. A young woman, a young lady, should have no will and no thoughts on such subjects. The delicacy of the female character forbids it. To place her advantageously and properly in life is the duty of her natural guardian, one happily who is fully alive to all the requirements and responsibilities of his position, and to his will she must assent."

"Well, Gresham, as Solomon says, 'the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord.' I hope you will be satisfied, and Angela have a worthy husband, and I am content."

Angela awaited the evening with impatience. Fancy is ever busy, and the human mind ever prone to anxiety; the ease produced by her morning's conviction survived only half the day; and during the remaining hours she relapsed into her former fears. When the evening came the first disappointment was in Everard's late

appearance. He entered with Robert only a minute or two before dinner; Robert confessed that for his part sleep had overtaken him; but the night before, Everard had not waited for an escort. Her second disappointment was more bitter. As the gentlemen left the dining-room, Everard said to Mr. Gresham, that if a fourth was wanted he should be happy to play at whist. Mr. Gresham understood him, accepted with quick and gratified politeness, and before Angela had considered the evening begun, she saw him summoned by her father and seated at the whist table for the night.

"How people can play at whist," she said to Robert, unable to restrain some expression of her feelings, "is a marvel to me. Do you like it?"

"Very much when I am in the mood. I am afraid too much sometimes; but I don't like to trifle my play away. I am like Elia's aunt in the Essays of Elia; I consider it a serious matter. Did you ever read the

Essay I mean? It is one of the best pieces of writing in the world;" and as Angela had not read it, and as he had observed the book in question, then a new book, to be on the table, he took it and read it for her entertainment.

Mr. Gresham, from his whist table, complacent and elated, contemplated them with unmeasured delight.

Desirous, as he had promised, to do his best, and to avoid the appearance of avoidance, Everard came down somewhat earlier the following morning, first ascertaining, however, that Mr. Merivale was before him. Angela was pleased, but had no power to enter into conversation, for Mr. Merivale, much to her annoyance, occupied the short interval before breakfast, by reading aloud a letter he had received from Italy. Of the annoyance he caused Mr. Merivale was perfectly aware, but he fancied he read Everard's design, and gave him his assistance.

There was no shooting this day, and

shortly after breakfast the brothers went into the drawing-room to wish Angela good-bye. Mr. Merivale was with her, still engaged with letters or papers. Angela was reading.

She laid down her book when they appeared, and Robert, ever curious, took it up.

"Camilla!" he said; "are you wading through Camilla?"

"If by wading," was Angela's warm reply, "you mean doing something difficult and heavy, no, I am not wading, but I am reading it, that is, I am *re*-reading it, for I finished it yesterday, and am looking at it again."

"Is it possible! and my mind was filled with thankfulness when, having once begun and feeling myself in duty bound to proceed, I found myself at the end."

"I dare say your opinion is very wise and good, Mr. Vavasour," Angela said, "but I don't mean to be scoffed out of mine. I like it."

"And you are right," Mr. Merivale ob-

served; "there is a great deal of trash in the book, and a great deal that is overdone, but there are many good and natural characters, and whenever that is the case, a book is worth reading, and worth liking."

"That is easily done," Robert said. "I could do it myself. If that is all that is required to make a book worth reading, nothing is so easy."

"I doubt it," said Mr. Merivale. "Not *your* powers, Mr. Vavasour, no doubt they are equal to anything, but I doubt the easiness of portraying natural characters."

"It is all done by receipt," Robert insisted. "Take your characters—any will do, the commoner the better—get them into a mess, no matter what, one hears of a hundred avoidable ones every day—then get them out again, and the story is done."

"Very good. I shall expect your work with interest, Mr. Vavasour."

"And so shall I," Angela said, laughing, "but till it comes, I must be satisfied with

such as Camilla. I hope you like it? Have you ever read it?" she added, turning quickly to Everard.

"Yes, my mother advised me to read it the other day, and I did."

"And are you on my side?"

"Part of it amused me very much. Camilla's character I thought extremely well done and very pretty."

"Oh, I don't care about Camilla," Angela cried, with quickness. "Edgar is what I like, and it is for the sake of Edgar that I am going to read the book again."

"Edgar was a prig," Robert observed.

"No," Everard said, "not at least my idea of a prig; but I don't like him. I think he behaved very badly."

"Edgar badly. How?" Angela said, eagerly.

"I think he failed in the very first of duties, confidence and trust. I was sometimes so provoked I could have thrown the book out of window."

"If you mean towards Camilla—how could he trust her? As far as appearances went, she did seem to behave most strangely."

"Yes, perhaps, but that is what I mean; we are not to be led by what *seems* in such cases. When we have formed on just grounds a good opinion of a person's character, we ought to trust them. Many persons," he added, with some warmth, "may be compelled by circumstances to act strangely; but if we have good reason to think well of their character, we ought to trust them, however appearances may be against them."

"So I think," said Robert, "though I believe Everard you have the Bible against you. As Strafford said, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man."

"I know one's trust might sometimes fail," Everard replied, "but I will stand to my opinion. I will trust, and I hope to be trusted."

Chance words, opinions expressed by

chance, sometimes make an impression which words spoken for the purpose of impressing fail to do. This opinion of Everard's sank deep into Angela's mind. It remained buried, and perhaps forgotten, but in an after time revived again.

When the conversation on this point dropt, Robert said he had appointed Hope to meet them, and it was time to be gone; both wished Angela good-bye, and departed accordingly.

She was taken by surprise at their sudden departure, and not till they were gone remembered that since those strange words of hers she had had no opportunity of speaking to Everard, or even of judging by his countenance and manner what he thought of her. She took up "Camilla," and sat pondering over it, not on Camilla's affairs but her own. Why had she not offered to walk with them? what could have been more natural. Why was Mr. Merivale always in the way? Yet again, if she had

seen Everard what could she have said? She could not recur to what had passed. How grave he had looked when he wished her good bye! She wished she could see into his mind. No doubt, however, she should shortly see him again, and with this last thought, after many cogitations, she smoothed her ruffled brow and began to read in earnest.

Mr. Merivale had been watching her; when he saw the knitted brow relaxed he rose and said,

"If I were not so crazy a concern in point of health, I think I should ask your father to board and lodge me. Italy is a long way off when one's eyes have business in England."

"I wish you would come and live with us," Angela said cordially; "I should like it of all things."

"Should you, my dear child?" he said, looking towards her with a scrutinizing air.

"I don't mean to say," she said, blushing a little, "that you don't sometimes worry

me. I am not very fond of being looked at in that curious way, and I don't quite agree with your views and opinions, but I should be ungrateful indeed if it did not give me greater pleasure than almost anything in the world to have you here, and even to have you find fault with me."

"You want watching, Angela; you are here alone, a very young, very excitable, and I may as well say what you know, a very pretty woman. Your manners ought to be guarded, sober, and discreet, instead of yielding, as you do, to every impulse. A guardian would be a good thing for you; a sensible woman guardian especially; but there is a still better thing, and that is, that you should be a guard upon yourself. I believe a woman's own refined and regulated mind is always her safest guard."

"If you will give me my rules to go by," she said, "I am sure I will do my very best to follow them; but how is it possible to be always weighing every word and every

action. I know I sometimes do what I am sorry for afterwards, but at the moment it seems so right. Besides, Mr. Merivale, don't think I mean to argue with you, I only say what I think—I think the world is too much tied up with rules; not good rules, but mere society rules—rules that leave what is good alone, and take notice only of what is showy. I will do my best I promise you, to do what is *right*, but I *will not* be tied up with rules that I scorn and despise."

He looked at her with a smile that said how plainly he read what was passing in her mind. He did not, however, intrude upon it, but only observed, "I partly agree with you, but remember this — a young woman is not the proper person to set herself against the world's common opinions. Her view may in itself be the right one, but it becomes wrong when held by one whose proper character is to be modest, sober, gentle, and discreet. A woman who braves

the world, may amuse, but is rarely respected. Now I have done. I hate lecturing, but I could not leave you without giving you a piece of my mind."

"And though I seem so rebellious, I thank you a thousand times. I will really try to be discreet, but sometimes I think the world is a vile world, and that my mission is to reform it. How I hate gold and silver."

"Little fool," he said, "how little you know what you hate."

CHAPTER XII.

What shall I do? Make vows and break them still?
'Twill be but labour lost;
My good cannot prevail against mine ill:
The business will be crost.

Oh! say not so; thou canst not tell what strength
Thy God will give thee at the length:
Renew thy vows and if thou keep the last
Thy God will pardon all that's past.

CHRISTOPHER HERVEY.

"HAS Everard spoken to you of his troubles, Joan?" Mr. Vavasour enquired of his wife on the evening of the day following the return of his sons.

Mrs. Vavasour looked up with surprise.

"He came to me," he continued, "this morning, with a confession; to ask my advice, and I believe to take it."

"If you smile there can be no great cause of trouble," Mrs. Vavasour said with an inward sigh, as she thought of the frowns over Robert's troubles.

"If I smile, it is not because I think lightly of it. Everard is in love, and love with Everard will be serious."

"Everard in love. Impossible!"

"And why so, Joan?" Mr. Vavasour asked with a look of enquiry.

"Everard," Mrs. Vavasour replied, after a moment's thought, "is grave and cold, and reserved. Of a strong attachment, I can suppose him capable, but of a sudden fancy I should never have suspected him."

Mr. Vavasour shook his head, but merely said, "Nevertheless, it has come to pass." After a moment he continued, "He came to me for advice and I gave it; but in justice to Everard, I must say, that his judgment

was even more decisive than mine. He leaves us to-morrow."

"You must tell me the tale," said Mrs. Vavasour, smiling. "It is a new thought to think of Everard as a lover."

Mr. Vavasour mentioned the few particulars that Everard had told him; among which, was the notification he had had of Mr. Gresham's dissatisfaction with his manners. "Everard's tale," he continued, "was somewhat incoherently told. I gathered the particulars rather than received them. He fully confessed the fact of his love, but owing to Miss Gresham's position, seemed to dread my condemnation, and to be ashamed to confess it. My feeling was different. I was neither surprised at the confession nor unprepared for it; but my opinion was decisive and I gave it. In consequence, he leaves us to-morrow."

"Forgive me if I ask it," said Mrs. Vavasour, "but is this departure either needful or reasonable?"

"Yes, Joan, both. Everard confesses that at this moment he cannot answer for his self-control. He has, therefore, no choice. I am not one to recommend a flight from temptation. If possible, I would always say, meet it whatever it be, and overcome it; but if a man in cold blood foresees that he shall fail, I see no course but flight."

"But why," said Mrs. Vavasour—"forgive me again for differing with you—why should not Everard love Angela Gresham, win her, and marry her?"

"Because his soul and mine also," said Mr. Vavasour, proudly, "revolts from it. It is not for Everard, at twenty, to court the favour of the heiress of thousands. An honourable soul avoids the appearance of baseness."

"Angela would be a good wife for Everard," said his wife, after some consideration, "and I think Everard would be a good and wise husband for her. Is the fear of a mere appearance of evil to be placed in competi-

tion with a true attachment, and one from which the blessing of domestic happiness would spring."

"If this thing be good and desirable," was her husband's reply, "it may at some future time be brought about by other means. Everard must not seek it."

"If Everard loves at all his love will be strong," said his mother. "It will grieve me if his love is wasted."

"The test of love is time. What is it now but a fancy, and what right has Everard at twenty to think his first fancy shall be satisfied?"

Mrs. Vavasour was silent. At last she said, "And Everard agreed at once to your decision?"

"Yes, and with all his heart."

"You are pleased with Everard's conduct," she said again, and this time timidly.

"I am, Joan, and chiefly for this reason—that although the feelings of youth are strong, his desire to do that which *we* call

right is unshaken. He honours his father and mother, and that honour guides him right, when possibly other principles have not attained sufficient growth to restrain him."

"Many have that," she said, with some passion in her voice, "but God has not given them the strength of purpose to do all things well."

Her husband saw where her thoughts had flown, and looked at her compassionately and tenderly; but his words were grave. "He might, Joan, if they sought it; we must trust He will"

Judging from analogy the likeness of Everard to his father ought to have won from Mrs. Vavasour, the same worshipping tenderness she gave her husband. But analogy in the seemingly capricious fancies of the human heart is no safe guide. That very strength of purpose and self-restraint which Mrs. Vavasour saw in her husband with idolatry, was painful to her in her son,

She would have loved him better, if he had at this moment been less unflinching. She owned, indeed, that since Mr. Gresham had spoken, he had little choice; but some demonstrations of weakness, some appeals to pity, would have pleased her well. As it was, she saw him simple and self-possessed; the cold, reserved Everard of her imagination; and being so, she let him go without a word of sympathy, or allusions, either serious or playful, to the cause of his departure.

But so once again she misjudged him. Everard left home with a wounded heart; wounded not by his feelings for Angela, but by his mother's carelessness to his concerns. He hoped for her interest, but failing to find it did not dare to approach her with his confession. Never before had the longing, the almost womanish longing to be loved so assailed him, and to this cause was it more especially owing that his thoughts pertinaciously recurred to the

image that had been forbidden—that one being who seemed to consider him worthy of her interest and regard.

The day after Everard's departure was Sunday, and Robert walked, as he and Everard had generally done, part of the way homewards with Angela and her father.

He talked of the pretty singing of the village children; praised and criticised Mr. Addison's sermon; and drew a smile of pure amusement from Mr. Gresham's lips, as he related some school-boy tales of extraordinary misadventures during the church service; but he made no mention of Everard's departure. His non-appearance was a great disappointment to Angela. She had counted much on these few minutes walk homewards; she determined, however, that she would not ask where he was; *that* she supposed would be acting with the propriety Mr. Merivale recommended. The natural woman was, however, too strong for the restrained one, and notwithstanding the determination,

before they parted with Robert the question *was* asked—

"Where is your brother to-day?"

"I cannot exactly say," Robert said, wilfully misunderstanding her. "At St. Dunstan's, or St. Clement's, or St. Martin's, or St. Paul's, or. . . . . ."

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Vavasour?"

"I mean that I don't know Everard's movements, nor the churches he frequents. I am only sure it is something very staunch and orthodox. No *ism* of any sort where Everard goes."

"Has Mr. Everard Vavasour left you?" Mr. Gresham enquired with interest and politeness.

"Yes, he went yesterday."

"And when does he come back?" Angela asked quickly.

"That I don't know. He has gone back to his business. My father gave him something to do which made him go sooner than

he had intended. At least," he added with a mischievous smile, "so he said."

Hurt, angry, injured, and indignant, Angela with difficulty restrained her feelings; and having parted from Robert, she walked on without a word.

Mr. Gresham saw her heightened colour, and felt how wise had been his precautions, and how happy he was in having to do with so estimable and amenable a young man as Everard. This danger at an end, all he assured himself would go smoothly, and he already boasted like those who are putting off their harness, their labour done.

Many conflicting feelings agitated Angela. Sometimes one class of emotions predominated, sometimes another. A sense of injury at his coldness; alarm lest she had lost his good opinion; a conviction that he loved, but owing to her worldly circumstances dared not approach her; and a longing to tell him with what joy she would give up all into his

hands. Under her ceaseless conjecturings her feelings made strides, and more than her fancy began to fasten itself upon him.

Robert followed Everard in a week. Before his reconciliation with his father he had made an engagement with a friend to accompany him in his yacht to the east. On his arrival at home in the first warmth of his feelings he had offered to give up the excursion if displeasing to his father. But Mr. Vavasour had declined to accept the offer. It was indeed his hope that Robert might learn to take and find more of his pleasures at home, but his concentrated thoughts and affections had not made him unwise or narrow-minded. He had sympathy with the natural curiosity of youth, and he was besides well aware that reluctant obedience is to the restless a dangerous trial. He knew no harm of the proposed companion, and was willing, therefore, to hope the best.

Robert's conduct during this last visit had

completely disarmed Mr. Vavasour's resentment. On a former occasion *he* had been smarting from the sense of disgrace, and had seemed cold; and coldly Robert had met his forgiveness. On this occasion the feelings and conduct on both sides had been different. Robert had been really repentant, and Mr. Vavasour really forgiving. A new bond had been knit between them, and Mr. Vavasour, whose strong and limited attachments made him prone to idolatry, was unconsciously hoping for his son with more than reasonable hope, and building in his sleeping and waking dreams proud and stable castles for the future.

All but Mr. Addison and one other shared in Mr. Vavasour's hopes. There was one other who felt with sad conviction that the time for confidence was not yet come. Hope watched Robert with eyes of vigilant affection, with eyes not blind through love, but from the very depth of her love clear and searching; and to her it was plain that in

his good feelings there was no root, and that there was no settled principle in his mind. She saw his repentance, his humility, his dutiful affection, his warmth of heart, his many good, many generous, many attractive qualities—saw and loved them; they were the signs of the good soul within; the buds of promise foretelling a future day of grace. But she saw them as they were, without the halo of illusion, and saw them unstable as water, and fading as flowers.

She determined before he went to make an effort to save him.

He was not very willing at any time to speak of himself or the future, and serious discussions even with her he avoided. It was painful to him to have his steadiness questioned, or good resolves doubted; perhaps from the very consciousness of the hollowness of the foundation on which they were built he did not care to have them sifted and weighed; and to give him pain

was very painful to her. Still she resolved to venture.

Two mornings before his departure she sought him for her purpose.

She found him in the library reading, or at least with a book in his hand. He was leaning back in an arm chair, close to a blazing fire; for the September mornings were growing chilly, and Robert loved comfort.

The door by which she entered was behind him, and she stood by his side before he perceived her.

"I am so glad to have found you alone," she said, softly.

"So am I, Hope;" and he looked in her face with a fond and serious smile. "But why? Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, Robert. And yet it is nothing new. Oh! Robert," and she clasped her hands together with an earnest movement, common to her when excited, "I want you to promise me to try not to forget.

"Forget *you*, Hope. Do you mean that? Yes, I will promise and vow, that I never—never will forget you. There was no need to ask that."

His tone was eager, and brought a faint unconscious blush to her cheek. But no other consciousness. "No, Robert," she replied with simple frankness, "it was not that. I am not afraid of your forgetting me. It was your father, his wishes, his forgiveness; dear Robert, will you promise me to try and remember when you are gone far away."

"I will do my best, Hope. You may trust me for that; but the path of life is exceedingly narrow, and some pilgrims are apt to grow weary in their progress."

He spoke not without earnestness and sincerity, and yet there was a careless wording in his speech, which left a doubtful impression on her mind.

"Don't look so troubled, Hope," he continued. "I really and truly mean that I will

do my very best, but one must not be proud and confident. You know frail and mortal man is born to get into trouble; at least, some are, and it is not for the weak to boast themselves like the strong."

"I would not have you boast, but only . . . . Oh! what would happen if you were to forget again."

"If I were to forget again, I should be a rascal and a villain, Hope, and should not find, and should not deserve forgiveness. Don't let us dream of such horrible possibilities. Let us rather think, dear Hope, that I shall persevere, and win all your loves, and all your honours."

He was still seated by the fire, and she still stood by his side. So as a child had she been accustomed to wait upon him, and old habits had never been broken. Dr. South beautifully says of those who have kept unstained their early innocence, that "the Holy Ghost has descended on them in the form of a dove." Such words are

very expressive of what Hope was. The guileless purity of her look had always exercised a singular power over Robert. He sat watching her, as she stood now beside him, silent and thoughtful, with strong but suppressed emotion in his face.

"Well, Hope," at last he said, "have you more to say? I think you have; you are not satisfied yet."

"There is one thing I should like to say," she replied with a slightly rising colour, "but . . . "

"Dear Hope, say all you wish," he said kindly; "don't be afraid!"

"You say you are weak, Robert, so are we all, if we do not try to be strong. Oh! Robert, why will you not. You know how it should be, but I am sometimes afraid you forget. Oh! dear Robert; will you promise me to remember your prayers."

"You shall pray for me, Hope; that will be far better. Your prayers are certain to be heard. I am not so sure about mine."

"But oh! Robert," and she clasped her hands, "what can any prayers do if you will not pray for yourself?"

"I hope they can do much. I depend on yours for me. I think of them, Hope, like so many good angels guarding me."

"But yourself, dear Robert, yourself. It is so dreadful to live and say no prayer. Oh! will you promise me to try?"

He looked very uneasy. He could not bear to refuse her, but hidden conscious weakness made him hesitate. "To tell you the truth, Hope," he replied, after a little thought, "I would rather not promise. I know I make resolutions, and break them, and that is bad enough; but there is something more sacred in this. I should not like to promise you this, and then to go and forget."

"But why forget, dear Robert, why forget?"

"Ah! Hope, why? That is a very puzzling question, and I can't answer it. I

tell you I am weak, and I do not like to trust myself with promises of this kind. I would rather not." He spoke hurriedly.

"I will urge you no more," she replied sadly. "I meant it only for your good."

Her tone was so soft and sweet, that it went to Robert's heart. It seemed to overset some hitherto restrained emotion.

"I know it," he cried, starting passionately from his seat. "I know it, Hope, my darling, and if I were not a fool and a coward, I should ask you, not only to pray for me, but to be my wife; my wife to lead and guide me all my life long; but I am afraid, Hope, you are too young yet. I might break your heart. Why do you blush so, my dearest?" he continued yet more vehemently. "Don't you know that I worship *you;* don't you know that if it were to promise to kneel to *you*, were it night and day, I would do it, and never forget."

It was with no thrill of rapture that this passionate declaration of love was heard and

received by Hope. *Her* love for him had had no dreams of earth about it; it was love bound up with his soul's welfare, and his profane and reckless words startled that affection, terrified and afflicted it. She withdrew from him a few steps, and stood before him with clasped hands and downcast eyes, looking so fair, so grave, so holy, so like some young saint in an ancient picture, that the next instant, half in jest, but much more in earnest, Robert in very deed knelt at her feet to ask forgiveness.

"Oh! Robert," she said, covering her face with her hands, "if you could know how you grieve me."

"Do I grieve you?" he cried, springing up; "yes, I know I do, and if you could but tell how I hate myself for it. But Hope," he continued, in an altered tone of almost reverend tenderness, "you must not be too hard upon me. I cannot be like you all in a minute, though I hope to be some day. If my love grieves you, you must forget it.

I know such a worthless sinner as I am, should not expect to have a holy saint for his portion; and yet, Hope," he paused and took her hand and looked fondly in her face, "and yet, perhaps, he does expect it."

She raised her eyes and looked at him, no longer shrinking from his gaze. She was not given to tears, but now a single tear did sparkle on her lashes, and dropped upon his hand. What it meant, nor she, perhaps, nor he could fully tell, but as he saw it his heart swelled with strange emotion, and silently and gratefully he pressed his lips upon her hand.

Nor then nor during the remainder of his stay did Robert speak of his own, or in any way seek to draw from Hope a confession of her affection. His manner was as it had been before, only that possibly something more of thoughtfulness characterized his intercourse with her.

Some departures take place without emotion; some even when it is but for a short

absence, agitate the surface of the home left behind. Everard went, and amid the kindly glances that followed him, none were dimmed with tears; no heart felt to lose its being as he disappeared. Robert went, and his father's voice was tremulous; his mother wept and could not restrain herself, and Hope stood mute and still in speechless sorrow. There might be other reasons for the difference; and Robert guessed them; yet still, above and beyond all other motives, he knew and felt he was the idolized son of the house, and felt it with a pang. It pierced on his conscious unworthiness like a dagger's stab.

"Mr. Addison," he said with emotion, for Mr. Addison stood at the door of his chaise, "I hope to come back worthy of my father's trust. If I fail. . . . . ." he paused, then added hurriedly, "Mr. Addison, will you stand my friend? Remember that man is weak. Don't let them ask too much, or judge me too hardly."

Mr. Addison grasped his hand in mute token of assent. "God bless you, Robert," he said, "and deliver you from evil."

Not with a thrill of rapture had Hope heard of Robert's love. Not with a thrill of rapture did she recur to it when he was gone. And yet. . . . . .

At first she trembled at the recurrence of his image to her thoughts—at first dreaded lest his words had placed a barrier between him and her devoted affection. But this was but the natural disturbance on the surface. When this passed by and her heart settled again into calm, she found that the new link that bound them was holier than before. He had a double claim to her thoughts and her prayers, and with a more intense devotion she gave herself up to be his guardian spirit for ever.

After Robert's departure, Hope felt that she had no right to withhold from her aunt the knowledge of what had passed. "Aunt Joan, did Robert tell you what he said to me?" was her confession.

It was no new thought, no new hope, to Mrs. Vavasour, nor was Hope's confession an altogether unexpected one. She wound her arms round her niece, and said, "Cherish his love, dearest; to that love I have ever looked as the feeling which will win him, and bind him, and make him all we would have him be in this world and for ever." And much as she had ever loved her niece, this new bond knit her soul to hers with a dearer affection.

CHAPTER XIII.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life,
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
GRAY.

"The gentleman."

So Mrs. Price's little maid announced Everard, a few days after his return to London.

Miss Price had not completely recovered from her accident, and was still lying faded in looks on her faded sofa. A sermon book and a piece of work were on her lap, but

she had dozed over both, and in her doze Everard's knock escaped unheard. The present piece of work was intended to give the impression of a heap of shells on the sand, and the hues of the various colours were very faithfully depicted. It was her own special choice, and she looked upon it as an exquisite thing.

"Good morning, Mr. Vavasour," she exclaimed, half rising, and extremely nervous and fluttered in manner; not that she owned to having been caught dozing, but she perceived that the salmon-coloured shawl had fallen from her feet, and her sense of propriety was shocked in consequence.

"I am afraid I startled you," he said, kindly.

"Oh, no, by no means, that is to say," as with a dexterous manœuvre she caught the shawl and threw it over her shoes, "I certainly did not expect a visitor this afternoon. And you least of any. I thought you were in the country."

"I left Audley Court last Friday. I should have called before if I had been able. I thought you would like to hear the news."

"Thank you, you are too kind. I hardly know how to express how kind I take your visit. It is not every person, not every young man who would take such trouble. I assure you I feel it."

"You need not thank me, Miss Price, for I am very glad to come," Everard said, quickly, "besides, I promised Miss Gresham I would call."

"Ah! dear Angela, she is always thoughtful. I hope you left her and her father well in health."

"More than well," said Everard, smiling, "you cannot think how well and happy they are."

"I hear from my niece occasionally, and I gathered from her letters that she was pleased with the country. I often think it must be a pleasant thing to see the fields

and the flowers. When I was young I thought little of the blessing, but now I feel as if it would make me young again. I sometimes see them in my dreams."

"I hope you will see them in reality some day," he said, kindly, touched by the dreary ideas her words presented. "I am sure Miss Gresham, when she is a little older, and has more liberty, will procure the pleasure for you."

"When she is married you mean."

"Yes," with a slight change of colour.

"Perhaps it is best not to think of such things. The future is not in our power. I try not to think of it. I try to be thankful as I am."

"I am sure that is being very wise; but I don't know that it is an easy example to follow, or that I should like to follow it if it were easy."

"Perhaps not. You are like dear Angela in that, she always wishes to know, and I tell her, better not. We might see a great

deal of trial in the future. God is very merciful. He hides it from us."

Everard looked at her, coloured and made no answer.

"And you left dear Angela well?"

"Yes well and . . . . beautiful," he added after a moment with a smile.

"She is pretty, certainly, and when she is happy, her smile is very sweet. I think she is happy. I told you that I heard from her occasionally, and when she wrote she *said* she was happy. She would write often if her father allowed it, but he thinks correspondence is dangerous for young ladies, and perhaps he is right; young ladies are not always wise."

"I think she might write to you without danger," Everard said laughing; "you would only teach her what is good, I am sure."

"I hope that is true. Still her father does not know; and besides, I am not very wise. I mean," and she assumed an air of some dignity, "that I do not live much in the

world, and I am not much in the habit of meeting with young ladies, and I might not perfectly understand. In fact it is best as it is, I sit and think of her, and pray she may be kept from evil, and may be happy when God pleases."

A pause followed. Though Everard's call had been made only in obedience to Angela's request, he had certainly felt strangely anxious about the visit; as if something, he could not tell what, would be discovered or betrayed. He now smiled at the folly of his expectations, and in his meditations on the subject, forgot to make himself agreeable.

"Are you come to town for the winter season, Mr. Vavasour?" enquired Miss Price, after a silence of some moments.

"Hardly winter yet; but yes, I am come to stay till Christmas, or near it. There is a great deal of knowledge which has to be got into my dull brains, and the sooner it is done the better. I am going to study very hard."

"You will be a great man I hope, Mr. Vavasour."

"I wish I could hope I should for my father's sake. He would like it. For myself, I do not care about greatness, except that . . . . " He stopped and coloured, and then was going to explain away his exception, when the placid answer showed him there was no need to think curious eyes were upon him.

"That is like dear Angela. She says she does not care about greatness and riches; but I tell her she does not know. Young people know very little what they like, or what they wish; especially gay young people like Angela. Life is so very different to what they think."

"Yes," Everard replied gravely.

"I suppose we none of us quite know what we like till we have tried it. I don't mean to say dear Angela is more giddy than most people; but she has strong fancies, and she thinks they will last, and

perhaps she does not know. We none of us do know. Man is very changeable. Not that I should think you were, Mr. Vavasour. I should say you were strong, only that we don't know till we try."

"No, I do not think I am changeable," he said in the same grave voice, "but you are right, we do not know."

Her common places were not common places to him. She had forced on his mind a thought which had not been very present before. That fancy for him which Angela had shewn was probably but the caprice of a day. He had no right to build upon it.

It was not a pleasant, but it was a useful reflection; and assisted him in his struggle to banish the vain and flattering illusions, which were but too ready to flit before his fancy.

In the course of the autumn Miss Price added this postcript to her letter to Angela.

"I omitted to tell you, my love, that I had a visit from your friend Mr. Vavasour.

He was particularly kind, but I know, dearest, I had you to thank for the visit, for he told me so. I have not seen him since, but he said he would call some day, so I know he will. He has been exceedingly kind. I happened to mention that I was fond of flowers; I don't know how it came out, but I did. I am sure, my love, you will believe I did not mean to ask for favours; but he has twice sent me a bunch of violets, so sweet and so fresh, it made me feel happy to smell them. I long to see him that I may thank him; but I know I must wait patiently."

Why Miss Price put this into a postcript it might have been hard to say, being, as it was, the only thing approaching to interest in her prosy letter. She certainly did not intend to fix Angela's mind the more intently on her communication, for she had not, as yet, opened her intellect to receive the knowledge or suspicion of her attachment; but, though unintended, such was

naturally the result. It would, at any rate, have excited interest. So communicated, Angela saw in it mysteries without end. It served her for many days of happy thought.

While Everard, in London, did his best to forget Angela, she, in the country, did her best to impress his image on her mind. Though the process is different the end attained is usually the same.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thrill me not
With words that, in their agony, suggest
A hope too ravishing.

Ion. *A Tragedy.*

Before Robert's departure he had voluntarily promised to return for Christmas. It was two years since he had passed a Christmas at home; and he was well aware of the joy his presence would give. At the end of November, in a letter dated three weeks before, from some port in the Mediterranean, he spoke of his intention as unaltered. But

Christmas came, and no Robert came with it. Night and day, Mrs. Vavasour and Hope caught in the wintry winds that swept round the house heralds of Robert's approach; but they were empty sounds.

Christmas came and past without a word. What each one felt, each one knew; but nothing was said. Mr. Vavasour waited with something of a new-born patience, as if unwilling to distrust again. Mrs. Vavasour assumed a cheerfulness she did not feel, lest her husband should suspect she had a fear. Hope trembled, and was still.

She had had her terrors. She had them still. Over the far future a star of hope ever shone, but darkness hung around the future that was near. She had a fear that a valley as of the shadow of death had to be passed through; and silently she strengthened herself to walk through it with him without dismay. No joyous visions entered into this her first love.

Though Robert did not come, Everard

came as usual. His greeting was as his departure had been, calm. The same kindly and approving looks and words; the same absence of that eager joy which marks the return of the house's idol. Perhaps in the disappointment regarding Robert, his greeting was more calm than usual; or perchance it was only his fancy that called it so.

He came back graver than he went, but more resolved. A few words of approbation in one of his father's letters regarding his conduct to Angela, a few words expressive of perfect trust in his truth and honour, had given him the spur he wanted. His father's views were so exactly the views of his own sober mind, his distaste to any courting of Mr. Gresham so instinctively shared, that though distant hopes might haunt his imagination, Everard was very firmly resolved against any further weakness in the present.

At the church door on Christmas day he and Angela met again. Mr. Vavasour was

leaning on Everard's arm. Angela's veil was down. There could be little to excite or satisfy the imagination. Yet Everard, through her veil, saw Angela's heightened colour, and Angela felt the gravity of his looks; and both entered the church full of earthly care. Everard struggling with a sudden revival of old weakness, Angela escaping from the present into pictures of future meetings; questioning the meaning of his grave face, and planning means of discovering the secrets of his soul.

On both, Mr. Addison's text fell warningly and startlingly—"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God,"—for the world's sorrows, of which he began to speak, were not like to their troubles, and the message of comfort he brought had little force at that moment to them. Everard roused himself with a sigh, and a conscious furtive smile; Angela said in her heart how bad she must be, and she wished she was better, and then . . . . dreamed again.

At the church door they met a second time, and the two families crossed the church-yard and went for a few steps down the lane together; but Everard had again given his arm to his father, and there was not even the appearance of a wish to escape. Mr. Gresham addressed Everard with the utmost politeness; inquired after his health, his journey, and the state of the atmosphere in London; but of a desire to see more of him said nothing. So they met and so they parted. After months of dreaming this was their meeting. Angela went home weary and discontented with the world. Not so weary, however, but that before evening she had recovered her sanguine temper, and was full of restless desires for the morrow.

Many morrows came and went, however, and brought no meetings more satisfactory than this. She saw Everard constantly, but for more than a moment rarely saw him. No restrictions were placed upon her movements. During the early winter she had

been in the habit of visiting Hope frequently, and she was allowed the same freedom now. Mr. Gresham appeared to ignore the possibility of danger from her intercourse at Audley Court. This implicit trust in his honour bound and strengthened Everard as nothing else could have done. It gave him pain, but it was an appeal he could not resist. With all his powers he endeavoured to meet his cousin's guest with indifference, neither to avoid nor to seek her. Possibly, nay, probably, his duty was overdone. Such things always are. Possibly, nay, certainly, Angela's mind was but the more stedfastly bent on endeavouring to discover the truth through the barrier of his indifference.

One morning, it was within a few days of Everard's return to London, Angela drove over early to spend some hours with Hope. This early visit was at Hope's request, and Hope's request had been made on a suggestion from Mr. Addison. Watching Angela with silent but observing eyes, seeing the

good of her disposition and the evils also, her precocious scorn of the world's ways, and her unreal and childish view of its actual ways and troubles, he thought that some knowledge of life in another sphere of thought, some sight of the unromantic ills of the poor, by bringing reality, might bring good to her character. It was in the morning that Hope usually attended to the sick and the suffering whom Mr. Addison placed under her special care, and her invitation to Angela was in the hope of persuading her to accompany her.

To Hope, Angela's feelings were very visible. A month or two before, it would not have been so; but experience teaches! Strangely different as were Hope's views of love, still her feelings for Robert, the new form of her feelings had opened a door in her soul hitherto closed. In some sort, these new feelings dragged her down to earth; but only superficially speaking. There is nothing heavenly in narrowness of

vision: the gaze upward from a ravine may be more concentrated, than from a plain; but it does not therefore, go nearer to Heaven; the wider field, the larger experience; the more embracing love is that which brings man nearer to an angel's life. Knowledge and observation, and experience, to natures like Hope's, bring suffering with them, for the dragging down is pain; but it brings increased strength for their mission on earth, and in the end wings the soul on fresher wings upwards. She was more fitted now to do good to Angela. She had a perception of mental trials and common temptations, before unknown; and with the knowledge, as it ever was with her, came sympathy and desire to help.

She acted on Mr. Addison's suggestion at once. The attempt was not, however, successful; in this first essay, at least, it was not so, and that from two causes:—the first cause, that Angela went to the work, her heart smarting and bitter with disappoint-

ment, too recent to leave her much power to consider the troubles of others. On their way to the village, they overtook Everard strolling along with his dog. He was evidently in no haste, and Angela thought common civility must force him to join them. He seemed to think so himself, for he did walk with them to the outskirts of the village; but there, instead of accompanying them further, he stopped, said he should call on Mr. Addison, and with a quick "good-bye," went off in another direction.

A second cause of ill-success in interesting her in the poor was, from the ill doings of the poor themselves. When she found the poverty of one family proceeding from the fact, that the husband was an habitual drunkard; the sorrow of another, from the transportation of a son; when she found in another house, the illness of a young girl proceeding from a beating given her by her mother, and that beating caused by frantic rage at the girl's vain and thoughtless con-

duct; her indignation and abhorrence knew no bounds. Little perfect as she was herself she had yet to learn that man is frail, and that the bitterest sorrows are those that sin brings with them.

As they returned homewards, she expressed, in no measured terms, her condemnation of the wickedness of the poor, and her astonishment that one so good as Hope could by her presence countenance guilt.

Hope, accustomed to the mixture of good and ill, and so hating sin that she would have gone into a furnace could she have dragged a sinner out, was yet unable to cope with Angela in argument; that charity which would do all things to save some, does not bear argument: it is the mission of some, not of all, perhaps only of those whose holiness is too deep-seated a quality to fear contamination.

"I will shew you some verses Everard copied for me the other day," at last she said. "They will say better than I can do,

what my feeling about human nature is."

This speech silenced Angela; partly satisfied her, partly sent her mind from her indignation against the poor, to her own troubles.

On re-entering the house, they found luncheon ready. There was a place for Everard, but he did not come. Mrs. Vavasour saw Angela's wandering eyes, and casually, but kindly, observed that Everard was very little of a luncheon eater. That might be a fact, Angela thought, but it did not make it less clear that he could have been at home if he had pleased.

Immediately after luncheon, Angela's carriage drove to the door; but a violent storm came on, and it was sent away for an hour. She then reminded Hope of her promise to show her Everard's verses; and together they proceeded to Hope's sitting room.

It was a pretty cheerful room in one of the

towers—pretty, but simple—in all its arrangements, betokening that the spirit which presided over it, was neither a lover of beauty nor intellect, nor luxury, but of something more earnest than any of these.

Hope brought her manuscript book, and was about to shew Angela the verses to which she had alluded, when a knock at the door summoned her to Mr. Vavasour, who wished her to copy a letter before post-time. She left Angela alone to look over her book at her pleasure.

The study of Hope's character in the selection of prose and verse before her, would in some moods have interested her; but disappointed and restless, she could at this moment only give her mind to that which concerned herself. The hand-writing of Everard did concern her; and over that she meditated, endeavouring to trace his qualities in the bold, upright hand; until, as she listlessly read the verses, their sentiments caught her attention, expressing as they did Hope's

epitome of Christian charity. The poem was by Emily Taylor; these were among the stanzas:—

There is an evil and a good
In every soul unknown to thee—
A darker or a brighter mood
Than aught thine eye can ever see.
Words, actions, faintly mark the whole
That lies within a living soul.

Perhaps thy sterner mind condemns
Some brother mind that, reasoning less,
The tide of error slowly stems
In pain, in fear, in weariness;
Thou call'st him weak—he may be so—
What made him weak, thou canst not know.

Perhaps thy spirit's calm repose
No evil dream hath come to spoil;
A firm, resistless front it shews
Amidst the passions' fiercest broil;
'Tis well!—enjoy and bless thy lot,
Still pitying him who shares it not!

Touched and softened she lingered over them. To feel real charity was very soothing, and, for the moment, the new feeling absorbed her. She was reading the poem intently for the third time when another

knock disturbed her. Before she could say "Come in,"—for, like a brother, Everard waited for no answer to his announcement of himself—the door opened, and he hastily entered.

When he saw the occupant of the room he stood still, and a flush of crimson changed the whole character of his face. For a moment they gazed at each other in embarrassed silence. It was the first time they had been alone since that evening whose memory pursued Angela with ceaseless torment. If he did not remember this she did.

He was the first to recover himself, and to speak. "I beg your pardon," he said, quickly; "I came to speak to Hope."

"Hope is gone to Mr. Vavasour," Angela said, composedly; her heart was bounding with expectation, but she was determined to behave with dignity and propriety. "She has been gone some minutes; I think she will be back directly."

There was a pause. Angela waited. She would not be forward; she would be ready, but not bold; she waited, her countenance, perhaps, very speaking, but her lips still. The pause was broken by Everard's slowly advancing; making her heart beat till it almost broke. But it was a needless agitation. He approached only to place a letter on the table, and, speaking in quiet tones, begged her to give it to Hope, and to tell her Mr. Addison wished for an early answer. Having delivered his message, he retraced his steps, merely bowing his head and observing, "I will not disturb you," as he left the room.

Tears of passion and resentment sprang to Angela's eyes, and would have fallen in a torrent if they had not suddenly been arrested by pride. "He does not, cannot care for me," she said, with bitterness of tongue, "and if he does not care, why should I? I do not mean to waste my life on a feeling that he despises."

She walked impetuously to the window and threw it open; the sharp air braced and cooled her, and having stilled her agitation, and calmed her countenance, she sat down again to await Hope's return. As she resumed her seat, a vision flashed before her eyes—Everard's startled gaze and flushed cheek when he saw her alone—and she involuntarily said, "Was *that* indifference?" With the words her resentful mood passed by; conviction, absolute conviction, took its place, that it was her hated gold which made him afraid, and strange venturous thoughts presented themselves to her mind.

"Uncle Richard thinks you had better go, Angela," Hope said, as she entered. "The sky looks so black he is afraid it will be a stormy evening."

"I think so too," Angela said, in a hasty manner, restless to be doing something. "Let us go down stairs. Oh! I forgot. Mr. Everard Vavasour brought that letter

for you, and begged you to send Mr. Addison an answer."

Hope looked at her, and saw her disturbed countenance; but, except by increased kindness in her own manner, did not appear to notice it. They went down together to the hall door, where the carriage was now waiting. The afternoon was piercingly cold, and on seeing the very slight preparations for a cold drive which Angela had made, Hope remonstrated, and insisted on going to Mrs. Vavasour to borrow a fur cloak and other necessaries.

There was a short cut to Mrs. Vavasour's rooms through the upper part of the library, and her uncle having recommended Angela's speedy departure, Hope opened the library door and hastened through. Angela followed her.

By the library fire Everard was sitting, reading the newspapers. He was accustomed to the servants passing through with coals,

and when the door opened he did not look round.

Hope went on her errand, but Angela paused. A strange impulse seized her.

With a step like lightning, as noiseless and rapid, she glided down the room and suddenly stood by Everard's side. It was in the very same place where Hope had heard Robert's words of love.

Everard sprang up with a startled "Miss Gresham!" and wonder and even dismay on his countenance, but, nothing daunted, Angela held her ground. Her manner was hurried, but was far from deficient in the dignity she knew so well how to assume, and which certainly in some degree qualified the strange things she did.

"Seeing you at leisure, Mr. Vavasour, I am come to ask you why you avoid me as you do. We used to be good friends. Have I done anything to offend you?"

"Offend!" he cried, in involuntary excitement. But the passionate sound of his

voice startled him into recollection; and feeling only the absolute necessity of self command, he suddenly became cold.

His hurried exclamation had not had time to assure and encourage her before he added, and in a manner as involuntarily grave and measured as that had been passionate, "Miss Gresham ought to know that she may give pain and pleasure, but cannot offend."

It is difficult for those who with violence restrain their feelings to hit the due medium. They can be hot or cold. They cannot be temperate. Very cold and grave were Everard's words, and coldly they fell upon Angela's impetuous spirit. She felt reproved, rebuked; and the impulse that had blindly led her ceasing to act, she stood humbled in her own sight and before him. Her colour went and came, her fingers trembled, and the conviction of being despised, made her incapable of raising her eyes to his face.

But these galling sensations were quickly put to flight.

In an altered voice whose tones were music to her ears, Everard abruptly said, "I am going to confess what I know I ought not; but you have rightly judged me. I *have* avoided you. I must; because I am a fool and cannot trust myself in your presence. I did not presume to think my conduct needed explanation; but if it does, if you care to know why I dare not come near you, your father's wishes, his most natural wishes, must explain it. And now forgive me and forget what I have said."

"Forget!" she said, softly.

Everard sighed and turned away his head; and in that sigh gasped down a temptation that was almost too strong for him. "Yes, forgive me," he said, hurriedly, "for I am saying what I should not. I have been warned, and I have promised, and I have no right to speak of what I feel." And perfectly conscious that if he were not to speak he

must be gone, he merely grasped her hand for an instant, and *was* gone before another word could be said.

Angela stood in a trance of happiness for a second, then glided away likewise.

Hope had passed through the room, and was now awaiting her with a cloak. Angela blushed deeply as she met the intent enquiring gaze of her young companion, but she said not a word. Silently kissing her, she jumped into the carriage and drove away.

END OF VOL. I.

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